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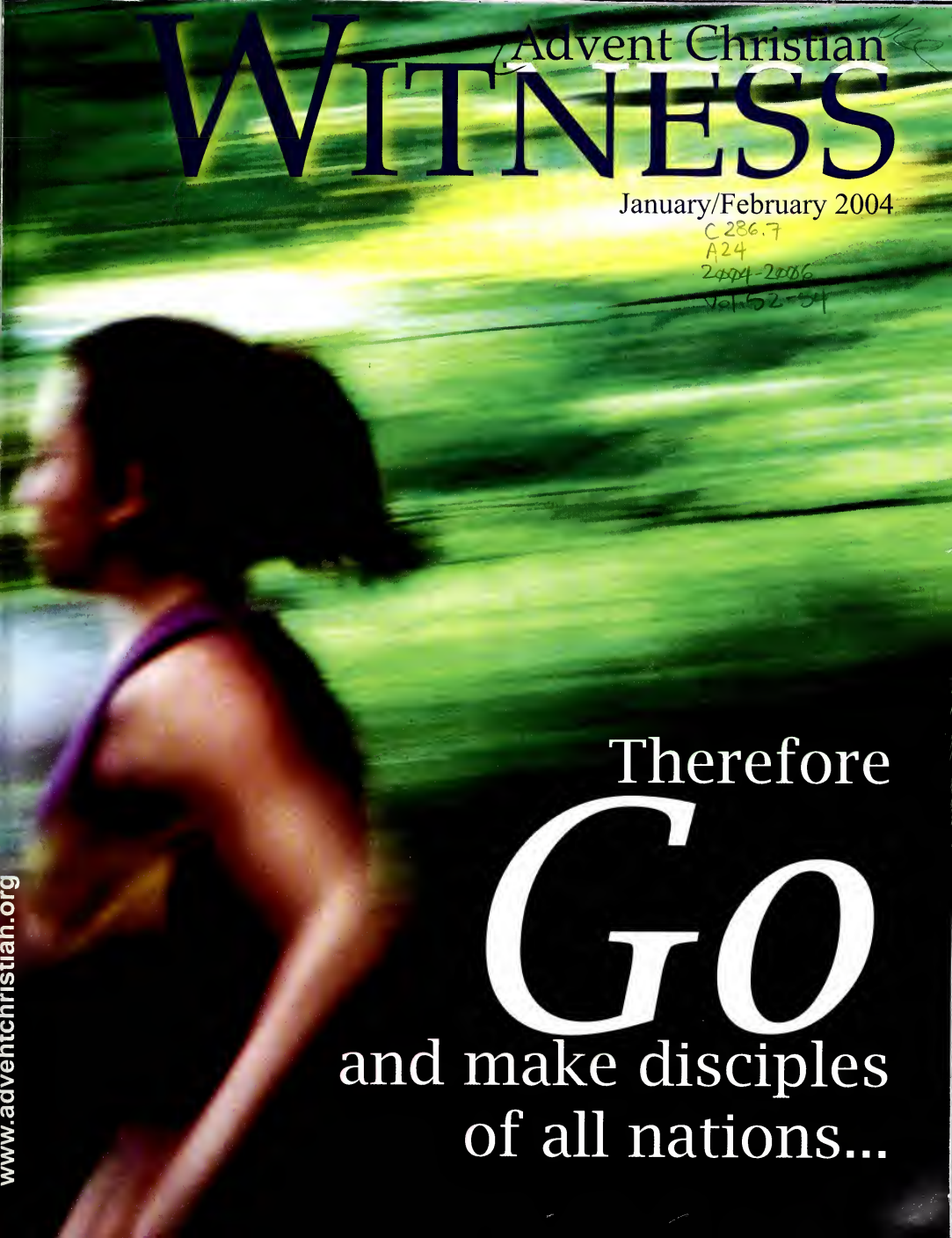
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Therefore
GO
and make disciples
of all nations...

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From the Editor



The letter was polite but unequivocal. The church was asking to be removed from all of our mailing lists. Since unanimously voting to change its name and disassociate from Advent Christian General Conference, it no longer wished to receive the *Advent Christian News*, the *Advent Christian Witness* or any other material from our denomination. According to the letter, this church made its decision for theological reasons, stating, "… the benefits of being a non-creedal denomination with autonomous churches do not outweigh the costs of allowing heretical teaching."

I am both saddened and angry by this decision. It hurts to be rejected. This church has given us the equivalent of a letter of divorce. We are somehow lacking, we don't measure up, we have "irreconcilable differences." Never mind that we have—according to their letter—112 years of shared history. Never mind that we have given and received comfort and support to each other for more than a century. Somehow, recent developments have rendered our past relationship irrelevant. That cuts pretty deep.

It also makes me mad to find members of a democratic organization complaining about it and abandoning it instead of accepting their responsibility to change it. That's kind of like divorcing the mother of your children because the kids are unruly! The letter states, "… it is long past time for the Advent Christian General Conference to officially embrace the truth…" including "…better defining in the Declaration of Principles…" Who do they think is going to make these changes? ME? **NEWSFLASH:** I AM AN EMPLOYEE OF A CONGREGATIONALLY RUN ORGANIZATION. I DON'T THINK I CAN EVEN VOTE AT A DELEGATE MEETING. THE ONLY WAY ANY CHANGE IN THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WILL OCCUR IS WHEN AN ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH APPOINTS AND SENDS DELEGATES TO INTRODUCE AND VOTE FOR A CHANGE!

(Continued on page 19)

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Singing with Elvis in a Karaoke bar



By Jason Hudson

"Are you from Seattle," I asked the woman sitting next to me on the plane. "No, I'm from St. Louis. I came out West to see my granddaughter. She's a performer at the Muckleshoot Indian Casino. Have you been there?"

My desire for visiting a casino was probably no greater than a card shark wanting to attend my church. Nevertheless, all I heard the entire flight to Chicago was how I needed to see her granddaughter perform the moment I returned home, and how great it would be if I could become her friend, and how much I would love the show. On and on she went.

The show consisted of singers impersonating famous legends from the past and present. This woman's granddaughter was a backup singer, and from what I gathered

during her three-hour persuasion speech, she was a good one.

As we disembarked, I promised this relentless woman that I would do my best to attend the show and meet her granddaughter. This put a big smile on her face, and we said our goodbyes.

After returning from my trip, I still had no desire to travel the hour it would take to see the show. Two weeks passed, and I had forgotten all about my promise. However, one Wednesday night, my evening plans fell through. I found myself completely void of distractions. From out of nowhere, an urge came to visit the casino and see the show. The events that follow lead me to believe it was Christ prompting me.

"This can't hurt," I reasoned. "It's a free show, I'm not spending money on slots, and no one here knows I'm the pastor of a church."

None of my friends were able to go with me, so I traveled alone. As the security guard checked my ID at the doorway to the casino, I stared into a world I had never seen. Erie sounds from electronic slot machines filled the large gambling rooms, interrupted only by the rare shouts of joy from fortunate winners. I peered over the shoulders of those holding cards and rolling dice, understanding nothing of what I saw. I was in a new culture.

I made my way to the theater where the show was about to begin. "This



Jason Hudson is pastor of Church on the Hill (AC) in Seattle, Wash. His interests include Katie (his new wife), studying Scripture, basketball, coffee and, of course, karaoke!

can't hurt," I reasoned. "It's a free show, I'm not spending money on slots, and no one here knows I'm the pastor of a church."

Soon the band began to play, and out came Shania Twain, or at least the woman posing as her. If the announcer hadn't told us, I would have believed it was really her. Two backup singers flanked her, and I immediately spotted the woman's granddaughter from the description I'd been given. I relaxed and enjoyed not only Shania Twain, but amazing performances by James Brown and Elvis Presley as well.

Following the show, I knew I had to at least say hello to the girl. I tracked her down outside the backstage doors. She was elated by my attendance because her grandmother had told her all about me. She rounded up some others, and we all went to the buffet to chat over dinner. After exchanging phone numbers, they told me to come again to hang out.

Two days later, I found something urging me to do just that: see the show and hang out. I grabbed a couple friends and dragged them along to the casino. It was even more entertaining the second time, and we met up with the performers afterwards. On this night they were going out to celebrate one of their birthdays, and they invited us to join them at the local karaoke bar. We agreed and met them there.

We entered the bar to find amateur singers belting out their favorite tunes, their eyes glued to the television monitor as the lyrics scrolled by. Beer flowed like the Jordan River, the smoke lingered as thick as that over Mount Sinai, and applause for the brave soloists was as generous as manna from Heaven.

I soon found myself being urged by the others to take up the microphone. "Come on…you'll do great! There has to be a song you know well enough to sing," they prodded. This was nothing I had ever done before, especially in front of professional impersonators.

"What could it hurt?" I thought, and in no time I found my voice assaulting the ears of onlookers with "Pretty Woman." Their faces had the look of people politely attempting to swallow a disastrous potluck casserole. "The expressions on their faces are from the bad taste of light beer," I desperately tried to encourage myself.

Receiving a weak handclap I returned to my seat. As I sat on my stool, I looked around at the others. Here I was with my two friends, the two backup singers, Elvis, and his girlfriend. No one was going to believe that I was with Elvis at a karaoke bar. Could it get any better?

It wasn't until the car ride home that I learned of a dialogue that occurred at the table while I was bleating my solo. My friend, Chris, recalled the conversation:

"The expressions on their faces are from the bad taste of light beer," I desperately tried to encourage myself.

"Is Jason really a pastor?" asked Elvis.

"Why would people like you hang out with people like us in a place like this? That's hard to believe!"

"Is Jason really a pastor?" asked Elvis.

"Well, yeah. He's my pastor," answered Chris.

Elvis shook his head, "No way!"

"No, he can't be," added his girlfriend. "Why would people like you hang out with people like us in a place like this? That's hard to believe!"

Chris assured them it was true. "You know, the Bible says that Jesus went to the very same places. Maybe there wasn't Karaoke, but He was constantly out among the people to show them who He was. He was our example, and we try to do the same."

That conversation led to a month-long string of visits to both the casino and the bar, during which Elvis and I became close friends. On one occasion in his hotel room, he even let me put on his jumpsuit and lip-sync the song "Poke Salad Annie." To end the shows, he would have the crowd participate during the final song. While the chorus played, we were supposed to stand and sing along. One night while introducing the song, he asked, "What's your name," and put the microphone to my lips.

Startled, I replied, "Uh, Jason."

"And what do you do for a living?"

"I'm a pastor." The crowd burst into laughter.

"So what you're sayin' is that you're used to leading the flock," he asked with the patent quiver in his upper lip.

"Yep."

"Well, tonight, Pastor Jason, this is your flock."

Pointing to the crowd he added, "and you are to follow his lead as he stands and sings during the chorus." The audience exploded with cheers.

Over the remaining nights at the casino, I pastored those sheep during that song the best I could. However, God intended for my care to go beyond my participation in the show. From then on I was known as "Pastor Jason" in the casino. Strangers in the building were continuously coming to me for prayer. Many would spill their tragic life stories. Time after time we would stop to ask God for healing and direction in their lives.

Conversation at the buffet began to center around Jesus, and we would answer their questions about Christianity for hours. Others came to hear me preach at

church, including Neil Diamond, who ended up running our soundboard that week. My own karaoke career improved, and the manager of the bar even offered to sponsor a church function sometime.

We made many friends and, because of a sweet grandmother on my flight to Chicago, we were sowing seeds for the Kingdom of God in a culture not our own.

Scripture informs us that Jesus sang hymns with His disciples. Elvis also sang hymns, but I believe had Jesus been in Seattle, the King would have been singin' with Elvis in a karaoke bar.✞



One Sunday Morning I Skipped Church

Clayton Blackstone

MILEPOST: JOHN 17:3

"That is his call to us– simply to be people who are content to live close to him and to renew the kind of life in which the closeness is felt and experienced."

— Thomas Merton in his last public address before his death

A father and son invaded my space on a quiet Sunday morning in Franklin, TN. On this particular quiet Sunday in May, I had decided to do what many of my friends do when visiting a strange city where no one knows their names – skip church.

Although a tornado blew through during the night interrupting the rest we anticipated from our mini-vacation, sleep eluded me about dawn. So while Hazel slept, I slipped out of the room and headed towards the pool area far removed from the guests who sipped coffee and munched Sara Lee apple or cheese danish. There I pondered a section of Scripture now long forgotten and prayed while staring through the glass walls at flowering shrubs that served as a feast for the eyes to a Mainer ravenous for sights of Spring.

That's when the father and son invaded my space.

I did my best to ignore them. I didn't want to close my eyes to the display of Spring that was refreshing my spirit as God and I spoke. However, If I wanted to continue to pray, the interruption gave me little choice. But the sound of movement in the water distracted me. (It doesn't take much to distract me when I pray.) I abandoned my attempts at this spiritual discipline and began watching.

As the young father played with his six-month old son in the pool, I wondered at first if he was providing his wife with an



hour of respite to pamper herself on Mother's Day. Then the unusual character of this father-son playtime drew me deeper. There was no rough-housing. No loud noises. No sudden movements. If Dad spoke, he spoke in whispers as his eyes shouted love. On a leisurely Sunday morning in Franklin, TN, I watched a Dad delight in his son.

Most of the time, the child laid one arm around his father's neck, never taking his eyes off the man who held him. Sometimes Dad hid his own head under water while carefully holding his son's above the surface. The little one never cried in alarm or whimpered in fear.

I sat. Stared. Pondered. Sensed a wave of gratitude for this peek into my heavenly Father's delight in me.

Later, I recalled a Frederick Buechner quote buried in my files:

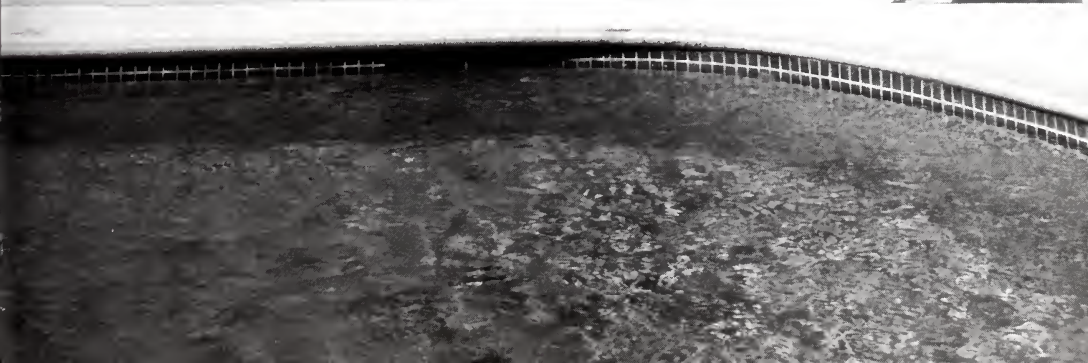
> *"We all want to be certain, we all want proof, but the kind of proof that we tend to want — scientifically or philosophically demonstrable proof that would silence all doubts once and for all — would not, in the long run, I think, answer the fearful depths of our need at all. For what we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists, not just that beyond the steely brightness of the stars there is a cosmic intelligence of some kind to keep the whole show going, but that there is a God right there in the thick of our day-to-day lives who may not be writing messages about himself in the stars but who in one way or another is trying to get messages through our blindness as we move down here knee-deep in the fragrant muck and misery and marvel of the world. It is not objective proof of God's existence that we want, but whether we use religious language for it or not, the experience of God's presence. That is the miracle we are really after."*

The miracle of the experience of God's presence. The miracle I pined for on the quiet Sunday morning I skipped church. The miracle I experienced when a father and son invaded my space.

Later, as the dad toweled off his son, he spoke. "I work at a job I could easily give twelve hours a day to. I must remind myself to attend to what's most important." And then they were gone to a wife and mom and who knows where, leaving me to my thoughts.

I reminisced about my work habits and attending to what's most important, especially as my kids grew. Those thoughts gave way to thoughts about the spiritual driven-ness that haunts many of us as followers of Jesus. The "Christian Service" and "Missions" sections of one of the hymnals shelved in my study contains sixty hymns





and spiritual songs of the work that needs to be done before the night comes. One of them boldly promises that we will "work till Jesus comes." And remember the admonition that "only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

We see our spiritual work mostly in terms of doing. Doing evangelism. Doing discipleship. Doing youth ministry. Doing leadership development. We've adopted the notion that if we build bigger and better programs, people will come. Over the years I've honed my skills as a "Contractor for Jesus." More than once I've salivated at the prospect of some multi-talented couple settling in and offering their collective energy for a "ministry" project close to my heart.

On my best days, I try.

But on a quiet Sunday morning ripe for church skipping, God used a dad and his six-month-old son to preach the finest sermon I've heard in years. He spoke deep in my soul through them. The divine voice didn't crack the glass windows that shielded the pool from the elements. The pen I held in my hand didn't take to writing on its own. It was one of those "still, small voice" moments when I knew that I knew that I knew that it was God. "When was the last time we played in the pool like that?" the Voice asked. "When was the last time you looked into my eyes and felt my delight in you?" [The answer to that would probably be never because the idea of God delighting in me remains more theoretical knowledge than experiential reality.]

Brennan Manning put it this way:

> *"The essential energy of the soul is not an ecstatic trance, high emotion or a sanguine stance toward life. It is a fierce longing for God, an unyielding resolve to live in and out of the truth of our belovedness."*

Several years ago while working through a Lenten series on the garden prayer of Jesus, the Spirit initiated what has become an ongoing dialogue with me about the twist Jesus gave to the subject of eternal life. I've kept most of my ruminations to myself. But on a quiet Sunday morning in Franklin, TN, a father and son spoke its reality deep into my soul. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

The question forming in my brain as I ponder the application of this living sermon goes like this: "If the business of eternity is the delight of a relationship with the Father and the culmination of what we are born for, then our work is not so much accomplishing tasks as attending to the Father."

On my best days, I try. But most of the time, the organizational side of ministry distracts me. Eugene Peterson deserves a rousing "Amen" for his declaration that "the biggest enemy of the Church is the development and proliferation of programs to meet people's needs. Everyone has a hunger for God, but our tastes are screwed up. We've been raised on junk food so that what we ask for is often wrong and twisted." Although I think that he's right, old paradigms linger.

This afternoon, I closed my Franklin Planner and walked away from the phone and computer to a place of retreat behind a cluster of spruce, fir and pine on our congregation's "back 40." I felt guilty taking time out of a busy day to play with my Father in the pool. Then I remember that at 2 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon, I was tasting eternal life.
Sweet!✞

Willing to GO



By Dwight S. Dean

As Barb and I stood in line with David at the Portland International Jetport our emotions were ready to be released in a flood of tears. They would not be tears of sorrow but rather tears of joy mixed with tears of uncertainty. We were preparing to say goodbye for a year, and we all knew much could change in the next year. How had we come to this point? Was this an experience all families had? We knew it was not. Still, these moments standing in the screening line of the airport allowed me to reflect on 22 years of life God had given us with David.

I thought back to that newborn, with a full head of dark hair, we had brought home from the hospital in Lake City, Fla., on March 15, 1981. I remembered how life had changed when we brought home our second son. Barb had stopped working to be home with the boys and they had become a source of never-ending excitement as we watched them grow. What a thrill it was when his grandfather, Dr. David A. Dean, was able to dedicate him, and us, to the Lord.

I remembered being called from a meeting when David was 14 months old to learn he was being treated for over 150 fire ant bites he had sustained when he sat in a fire ant hill in our yard to play trucks. God's grace and an informed medical staff at the Advent Christian Village saw him through.

When we lived in Tampa, I was privileged to baptize David in 1989 in witness to the fact that he had made the decision to accept Jesus as his Savior and Lord. It was as David began to attend public school we noticed he seemed to make friends easily with students of different ethnic backgrounds, and they were often guests in our home and at David's birthday parties. We always enjoyed watching David's contagious smile and listening to his quick wit as he joked with his siblings, relatives and friends.

When we moved to Dover, N.H., we realized that David was a gifted reader and writer who won several awards and recognitions for his accomplishments. We had no youth group in our church so David and his brothers attended the Baptist Church's Boys Brigade on Wednesday nights. David's leader, Paul Perry, told us he wanted to work with David as he saw in him a future leader. How pleased we were to hear that. David enjoyed summer camp and attended camps at Mechanic Falls and Camp Washington where he met Kent Davis who challenged David to serve the Lord wherever He led him. When we moved back to Dowling Park, Fla., in 1994 we saw that David did have real leadership potential and was continuing to mature as a disciple of Jesus. In 1997 we moved to Friendship, Maine, and watched David conclude his high school years with outstanding scholastic achievement. He also showed continuing spiritual growth under the guidance of his youth pastor, Mike Poli. He was a regular attendee at Sports and Music Camp at Alton Bay and he began to minister as a counselor at Camp Lakeside.

During his senior year and following his graduation from high school he worked at MBNA and learned many important lessons about the work place. Barb and I wanted to prepare David, as we had his older brother, to attend a secular university so we sent him to The Summit in Manitou Springs, CO for a two-week Christian leadership camp. This camp, headed by Dr. David Noebel, is designed to prepare students to defend their Christian world-view on a hostile secular university campus. What a blessing to have David be able to attend The Summit and be grounded in his faith.

In August of 1999 we made the trip to North Carolina where David entered UNC Chapel Hill as a freshman. He became involved with Campus Crusade for Christ from the very beginning, participating in their weekly campus Bible Studies. He also found a wonderful Bible-believing church and committed to attending it regularly. Eventually this church would provide him with a mentor, an important piece in David's spiritual growth.

Following his sophomore year, David went on a six-week summer mission trip to East Asia with Campus Crusade. That experience changed his life and aroused in him a heart to serve. His next two spring breaks would take him to Detroit and Dallas to do inner city ministry, also with Campus Crusade. After his junior year, David served as an assistant director at Camp Vesper Point, a large church camp outside Chattanooga, TN. That summer found David growing in his ministry gifts.

His senior year at UNC saw David co-leading a weekly campus Bible study for Campus Crusade, serving as an RA in one of the dorms, working with the youth at a Chinese-American church on Sunday afternoons and sensing God's call to do something more. In the spring of 2003, David was accepted by Campus Crusade to go on STINT, their one-year short-term international missions experience. His team's task would be to open up a new campus ministry in East Asia. While his mother and I were excited, the task of raising $27,000 in the three months following his graduation and before leaving seemed quite formidable. How much we needed to grow in our own faith! David never wavered in his!

I began to pray but with the words came the tears. Boy, did the floodgates open as we called upon the Lord to continue to lead and protect David...

Now we were standing in line preparing to see David off for a year in East Asia. He was to fly to L.A. for a week of training and then on to an unnamed country in East Asia, a country that is officially closed to the gospel. Like his grandparents (David and Dorothy Dean) who had gone to India in their retirement, like his uncle and aunt (David and Melody Dean) who had been Advent Christian mis-

sionaries to the Philippines, like his younger brother (Joshua) who had gone to Mexico for five months to learn the language and culture and to serve, David was now about to say goodbye to his family and follow the Lord's leading.

After taking a picture we all gathered close to pray. I began to pray but with the words came the tears. Boy, did the floodgates open as we called upon the Lord to continue to lead and protect David as He had for the past 22 years. As he went through security, we watched him as he explained to the guard he was headed to L.A. and then on to East Asia for a year. The words of Jesus came to our minds, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations…" How wonderful to see our son so willing to go. And how thankful we are for all those who helped make David a disciple of our Lord!✞

Rev. Dwight Dean is pastor of the Friendship Advent Christian Church in Friendship, Maine.





REVIEWING

Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

By now many of you have had the chance to reflect on the viewing of the movie, *The Passion of Christ*. I am still processing what I saw, or I should say "experienced," but I wanted to say a few things about the movie and what God is saying to me before too much time passes.

Mel Gibson is to be applauded for his tremendous work on this movie. It is clear from the beginning to the end that this was important to him. This movie was first class all the way. He obviously believed in this work, as he was the sole financier of the project. But, as one can tell from the movie, it was more than a "project," it was something he really believed, and more importantly, wanted to share with the world.

It's not too often that one does something that will touch the entire world. Many good things are done every day that never go beyond the immediate area of the event or happening. Today, we are blessed to have the media that enables the news to get out to the broader public. Unfortunately, the bad news travels as fast, or faster than the good news. Therefore, I am very thankful that this time the news was good.



One of our church members said something the other night that made me realize just how important this movie could be. She said that there would be many nominal Christians and even spiritually lost people who would be not only viewing this movie, but the name of Jesus and the words of the Scriptures would be passing through their minds and lips as they read the captions throughout the movie. That was a truly remarkable thought. People all over the world would be hearing the Word of God and seeing it portrayed over the screen for perhaps the first time in their entire lives. WOW!

I was also excited about how this movie was used to bring the local church together. It was exciting to see our people come to the mall two to three hours in advance to eat together and prepare for seeing the movie. One of our members had not been to the movie theater in over 35 years. Again, WOW! To see many of our church attend this movie was truly a blessing and then to hear, or should I say, "see" the reaction of our people to the movie was powerful. After the movie was over, one of our men could only mutter the following words to me, *"Wow, Jesus really loved us, didn't He?"*

The love of Christ is so evident in this movie. One of the people who attended the movie asked the appropriate question after seeing the unbelievable amount of punishment and pain Christ was subjected to on our behalf when he said, *"Why would God allow that to happen to his Son for us?"* The answer is revealed in the most familiar Bible verse of all time, *"For God so loved the world..."* (John 3:16).

It's one thing to hear people say that God loves you but quite another to see a visible expression of what Christ went through to prove it. At one point in the movie, as Jesus is making his way to the Cross, his mother, Mary, comes to him. Obviously, she wishes like any mother that she could take this pain away. However, Jesus' response reaffirms why he must keep going, even to the point of dying on the cross. Jesus told Mary, *"...behold, I make all things new."*

Images of Christ that have been presented down through the years flooded my mind as I watched the movie. Many of the portrayals of Christ over the years have, in my mind, fallen far short of the one given by The Passion. Jesus was both tender and tough. He was patient, yet powerfully motivated towards the goal of the cross. Jesus was, in a word, real.

In the midst of all that was being shown on the screen, one thought kept flooding my mind as I watched. I sensed God saying to me that He loved me enough to give up his Son for me to prove it. I couldn't help but think as I viewed the movie, *"If God would give me this and I would say that I loved him back, what will I give to prove that I love Him?"* Throughout the movie I considered the Passion of my Lord, and wondered where my passion was? What is it about my life that proves I love him? How far would I go to make sure everyone knows my love for the Lord is real? In the process, I asked myself. "Do I have a passion for 'The Christ'?"

It's one thing to watch a movie and be emotionally, even spiritually, moved. It's quite another to be resolved in one's innermost being to live his or her life to the fullest for Him. This movie has motivated me to live my life more fully for Christ, and I want this for you as well. Years ago, Francis Schaeffer wrote a book with the following title, *"How, Then, Should We Live?"* After watching this movie, I am moved to revisit the heart of this question in my own life. After knowing and seeing the love of God for us visibly presented in the movie, *"How, Tken Should We Live?"*

It is my conviction that we should live differently and more passionately about that which has changed our lives. I want to be passionate about the things of Christ and am determined to live that way. I hope you do too! Perhaps you should revisit your own approach to living for Christ. Maybe you too should ask, "Do I have a passion for 'The Christ'?" I hope so!✞

Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren is pastor of West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church in Florida and also serves as recording secretary of the executive council of Advent Christian General Conference.



(editorial continued)
(By the way, in its letter of disassociation, the church acknowledged the fact that Advent Christian General Conference was a member of the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization that represents 22 million Evangelical Christians in 52 denominations. See the inset box for the NAE statement of faith).

I know it can be frustrating and time-consuming to work for the improvement of an organization. On the other hand, if one sincerely believes change needs to take place, Christian charity compels us to make the effort. Many a wife or husband endures years of frustration as they encourage a spouse to abandon destructive behaviors. Holy matrimony demands it. And often the fruit of their commitment is the salvation of their partner. Is the combined work of more than 300 Advent Christian congregations worthy of less commitment? Aren't the benefits of a shared heritage and lifelong partnership worth the effort? Don't the advantages of churches sharing one another's burdens and needs and joys outweigh the appeal of a denominational divorce?

****

The phone call from my doctor was brief and unexpected: "Keith, you need to go to the hospital immediately." Earlier in the week I experienced a brief loss of vision and the doctor ordered an MRI. The results showed a carotid artery dissection—a tear in the inner wall of my carotid artery. My temporary blindness was the symptom of a mini-stroke caused by a clot from this tear. Even as I dismissed the doctor's instructions as an overreaction, the Karmon Norris prayer circle was sounding the alarm. Who knows how many prayers were offered on my behalf—even as I was rejecting the idea that my life was in danger?

After two days in the hospital taking a blood thinner intravenously, I convinced the doctors to let me go home and give myself the necessary injections. Barely unpacked, I began to search the Internet for anything I could find under "carotid artery dissection." There wasn't much to be found, but the information I could find was sufficiently scary. Seventy-five percent of people with a carotid artery dissection die. The survivors usually suffer from some debilitation caused by a stroke. The neurologist I visited confirmed the gravity of the problem with his opening words, "I'm surprised to see you standing. After reading your chart I fully expected to see someone paralyzed."

During the subsequent weeks the realization that I beat the odds became increasingly clear. Exactly one month after my mini-stroke, a Tucson High School basketball player was paralyzed with a carotid artery dissection after being tackled by cheering fans. He had finished a winning game with a slam-dunk. Now, he cannot move his right side and is in speech therapy. Even he is lucky, compared with the typical victim. Actor John Ritter's sudden death from a similar problem illustrates the usual outcome. Compared to both of them, my regimen of daily blood thinners and six months of reduced activity seems pretty mild.

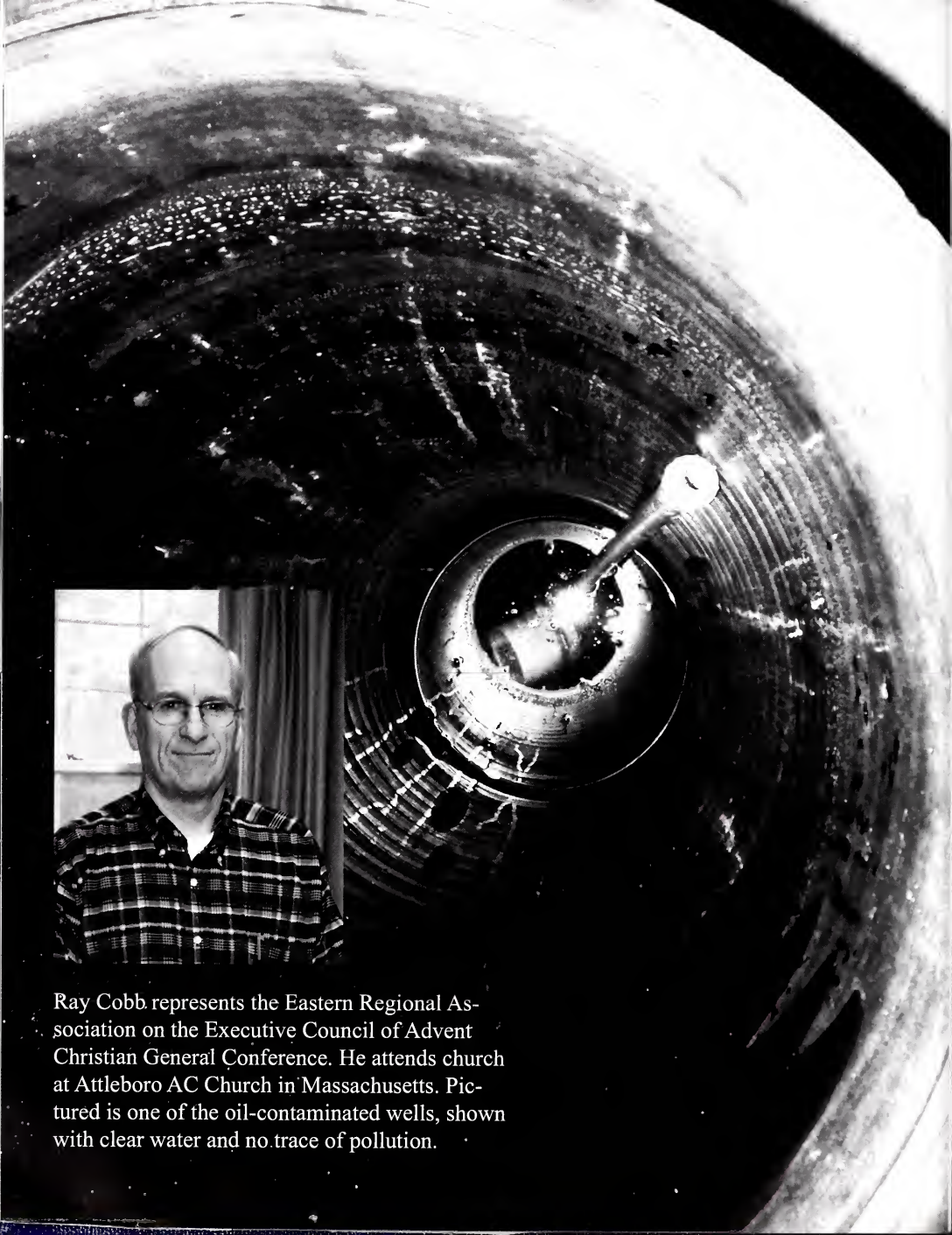
You may be asking yourself, "What does Keith's health problem have to do with a church leaving the denomination?" It's actually quite simple: when the neurologist commented about my remarkably good condition, I informed him that I had people all around the world praying for me. I repeated this explanation to my regular doctor. In fact, I've said this to most of the people who ask about my condition. But, if I were a member of the church mentioned above, I couldn't make this claim. And I doubt I'd be in the same shape.

I've always believed that prayer makes a difference, that it helps… *other* people. For the first time in my life I know what it is like to be the subject of a multitude of other people's prayers. And I believe that is why I could stand up and shake my neurologist's hand. Only by being part of my denomination could I enjoy the benefits of being prayed for by complete strangers miles away. In fact, some of these people were praying for me while I was still ignorant of the danger.

When Jesus returns we'll find out how much difference a prayer makes. We'll see how someone in Washington state could help someone in North Carolina by remembering his need and mentioning his name to the Lord above. While organized prayer may seem a small reason for remaining associated with other churches today, that Day may reveal it's the most important. I'm convinced it's the reason I'm still writing this column. And I wholeheartedly mean it when I say, "Thanks for the prayers!"✞

NAE Statement Of Faith

- We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.



Ray Cobb represents the Eastern Regional Association on the Executive Council of Advent Christian General Conference. He attends church at Attleboro AC Church in Massachusetts. Pictured is one of the oil-contaminated wells, shown with clear water and no trace of pollution.

The Lord changed OIL into *water!*

By Ray Cobb

In November of 1995, at a commercial rental property that I own, more than one-hundred gallons of heating oil leaked under the cement floor in the basement. The oil company had put 100 gallons in the tank the first part of November but when my tenant put the heat on they found the oil tank was empty. The Department of Environmental Protection got involved and I had to hire an engineering company to clean up the spill. You're given one year to clean the spill and if it is not cleaned up to specification then your deed is not clean either. The original estimate to clean the spill was more than $40,000, and insurance does not cover this. I heard about similar cleanups costing $150,000 and up. I had to turn over everything to the Lord and he gave me the overwhelming sense that he was in this somehow.

The oil recovery began by digging down to the water table about four feet below the surface of the floor. The oil, which was about 3/8" thick, was floating on top of the water. It was bright red in color. A 15-inch pipe was inserted into the hole making a well on which to float a passive skimmer, which would skim off the oil over time. We then had a lot of rain and the water table rose about 18 inches. A vent system was also installed which consisted of six probes that went into the soil, which were hooked up to a vacuum pump and vented to the outside. That was designed to clean the soil over time. Instrument readings on the vent system started at 11 parts per million. Much to the surprise of the engineers, within two months it was down into the "one" range. Five would have been good! I was there when the man checked the readings, and was he scratching his head!

Several months later the owner of the engineering company called and said that he wanted to finish the project but he had a problem. He said, "We can't find the oil." I replied, "Well if you can't find where the oil is, I probably know were it went." He was very curious. I asked him if he was interested in spiritual things. I then told him that soon after they found the oil on top of the water I prayed, "Lord, I know that you changed water into wine one time and I know that you can change oil into water. And you said to ask what we will and you would give it to us, so I ask you to change the oil into water in Jesus' name, amen." He chuckled and said why didn't you ask Him to change it into wine?" I said, "Because I'm not a drinker!" After a long silence he said, "Oh no, what am I going to put into the report to the state?" He said that further testing had to be done to determine if the oil had moved. So three test wells were drilled around the building so that soil and water samples could be taken and also to determine which way the water ran underground. All tests came back well within acceptable levels. This proved that the oil hadn't moved. They also couldn't figure out why, but the main well at the spill site was the cleanest in the water tests.

Praise the One True God! He answers prayer directed to him. His grace is so undeserved and marvelous to me. The engineering company even said that they have no other explanation for this except that a miracle took place. I have a final report which they told me could be used in a court of law to prove this case.

If anyone has oil heat, check for leaks; it could be costly. This cost me about $20,000 out of pocket. As the bills came in, though, we were able to pay them. My wife and I have always given a tithe and more and knew that He would supply. He says in Mal. 3:11 that," "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty."

Turning fuel oil into water was a miracle of the Lord and I praise Him for it, but the greatest miracle I've experienced was when Jesus came into my heart personally and saved me 40 years ago. As I confessed my sin to Jesus and trusted Him as my Savior, a whole new life opened up for me. When I realized that my sins were forgiven and atoned for at the cross of Calvary–Wow! The "death" that I had earned for being a sinner was completely paid for by Jesus when he suffered and died. For the first time in my life I was free from the "wages of sin" because he gave me the gift of eternal life. As a result of my salvation I want to live for Him, as he has prepared good things for me to do. He has worked in my life so many times over the years, even turning oil into water by his grace!✞

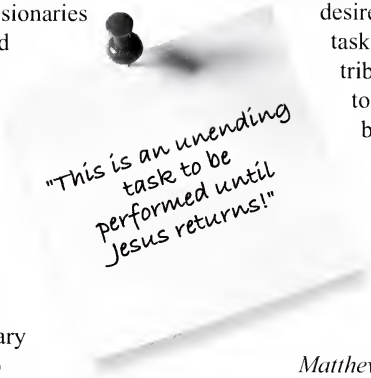
WHFMS: The "State of Our Union" Address



President Randee Davis examines the WHFMS organization to evaluate how it is doing in carrying out the Great Commission. She looks at who we are as an organization, where we came from, and where we are headed. Randee asks the tough question, "Will it involve change in the organization to advance the Kingdom?"

For a little over a year it has been my pleasure to serve as president of the National WHFMS. My association with this group began when I was a child growing up in First Church in Lenoir, NC. I started

learning about our missionaries in what was then called MiLows. I remember one Sunday morning Barbara Deverick called us to the front of the church for a lesson on missions. She had a shoebox for the object lesson and told us that she had a live missionary in it. Each of us got to look inside the box and see the missionary. Inside the box was a mirror and looking back at me was my own reflection. I learned early that I was a missionary with a responsibility as a child of the King to tell others about Him. Later, I joined YWA. It was about this same time that evangelist Julius Parker came to preach a revival at our church. During that revival in 1960 the Holy Spirit spoke to me and I asked Jesus into my heart. I'll never forget that night or the lessons that I learned as a young woman in YWA. I was fortunate to have been a part of the Girl Scouts where I learned to always "be prepared", the 4-H Club where I learned to "make the best better", and the YWA where I learned to "love to tell the story". Years later I graduated from the Young Women's Auxiliary and joined the YOMAR Missionary Circle of the WHFMS. I am very proud to have been a member for over 37 years.



One of the best things about being WHFMS president is that I get to go places, share my testimony and talk about what the Lord has done in my life. I get to challenge and inform Advent Christian women that Christ desires that His church complete the task of taking the gospel to every tribe, language, people and nations; to help women see that they can be personally involved in world missions and mobilize their churches for full participation in world evangelism! **This is an unending task to be performed until Jesus returns!**

Matthew 28:19, 20 says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Sarah K. Taylor organized the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society in 1897 in Friendship, Maine. This first group started with four active members and two honorary members who were men. Mrs. Taylor's objective was to *"organize and unite the efforts of women of the Advent Christian denomination in sending the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, deepen the spiritual life among believers in Christ, and by this organization render or make more efficient the work of the women in our Advent Christian churches."*

Sarah K. Taylor's vision caught on! During the first year the national membership increased to 300! The second year there were 638 members and 37 locals! At this point in our history, the main theme of the ladies' work was **missions**! In 1898 the WHFMS took on the support of a school in India. In 1900, "the Great Famine" hit India

Continued on page 28

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference President
Rev. Ron Thomas, Jr.

... He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong **(2 Cor. 12:9-10).**

Guideposts (95) published the story of Jim Stovall who became totally blind at the age of 29. While he still had partial vision, he volunteered at a school for the blind. He was assigned to help a four-year-old boy, blind and severely handicapped. Stovall spent considerable time trying to convince the boy he could tie his own shoes and even climb stairs despite his limitations.
"No, I can't!" the boy insisted.
"Yes, you can," Stovall replied.
"No, I can't!"

The verbal battle went on. Meanwhile, Stovall fought his own limitations. Because of his deteriorating vision, he had decided to quit his college courses. On his way to withdraw from college, he passed the school for the blind and decided to resign from his volunteer position as well.
"It's just too tough," he explained. "I can't do it."
"Yes, you can!" said a little voice beside him. It was the four-year old who refused to tie his shoes.
"No, I can't!" said Stovall with conviction.
"Yes, you can!'

Stovall realized that if he didn't continue, the child would give up too. So Jim Stovall stayed in school and graduated three and a half years later. The same week he graduated, his little friend tied his shoes and climbed a flight of stairs, sitting on the top step ("Leadership", Spring, 1997).

How often I have said, "I can't do it!" It is said more often to myself, lest anyone hear me and think I'm a quitter. But the fact is, I'm realizing more and more there is so much I can't do. Aging has a way of reminding us of the things we can't do. However, as limitations are considered, I must remember that what I am asked to do is not always mine alone to accomplish. I have become more aware of those around me who can assist or even step in to do what has to be done. Our weaknesses cause us to draw on the strengths of others. And while it might trouble us that we seem to be becoming more dependent, that in itself may not be all that bad. Isn't that what the Apostle Paul was saying in his message to the Philippians when he wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

I'm becoming more accepting of my limitations. For I am becoming more dependent upon the One who knows my weaknesses. Consider this thought:

"God would prefer we have an occasional limp than a perpetual strut. And if it takes a thorn for him to make his point, he loves us enough not to pluck it out" (Max Lucado, Let the Journey Begin).

Hudson Taylor once said, "All God's saints were weak people."✞

Twisted Scriptures

Rev. Tom Warner



"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"
John 11:25-26 (NIV)

Now and then, I hear well-meaning Christians try to make those words of our Lord support a platonic concept of immortality. When they read that the believer "**will live**, even though he dies" and that he "**will never die**," they conclude that "death doesn't exist for us." They may even suggest that the soul is better off without a body, and more alive than ever after death.

Such an interpretation ignores the very claim that Christ was making. He said, "I am the **resurrection** and the **life**…", and the promise that immediately follows is clearly related to his claim: he has the power to **raise** people to eternal **life** (cf. Phil.3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor.15:50-54).

Martha (whose brother Lazarus had died) said that she believed her brother would rise again on the last day (11:24); and Jesus was informing her that the promised resurrection was intimately connected to his power as God's only Son and Messiah. Then he went on to give a small demonstration of that power, by calling her brother back to life (11:38-44)!

The scholars who produced the New Living Translation evidently realized that the words of Jesus in John 11:26-26 were often misinterpreted, and they were careful to convey the true meaning. (I'll add some bold print for emphasis, and include some explanations in brackets.)

"Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will **live again** [i.e., they will be resurrected to bodily life]. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will **never perish**" [i.e., those who trust in me will be resurrected to immortality and will not suffer eternal destruction, as will the unsaved].
John 11:25-26 (NLT)

Scripture teaches that unsaved people will be resurrected, but they will "rise to *be condemned"* (John 5:29 NIV), and then will perish in the "second death" (Rev.20:11-15; Matt.10:28). Those who are saved will "rise *to live*" (John 5:29 NIV), i.e., they will be resurrected to live forever. This is the meaning of our Lord's saying in John 11:25-26; it is a wonderful promise of resurrection to immortality. We should not twist it to teach that death isn't real for believers. Death is very real, but our risen Lord is more powerful than death, and he will have the last word. Hallelujah!✞

Tom Warner is currently a chaplain with Ministry to the Aged, serving retirement homes and care centers in Boise, Idaho.

…things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

Break the Code

Replace the numbers with the correct letters.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	N	I	L	N	O	R	S	T	U	V	W
3	11	17	5	9	1	16	10	2		14	8	4	12	15	6	18	13	7

6 10 2 15 2 15 14 4 13 9 : 8 4 6 6 10 3 6 7 9

14 4 13 9 5 16 4 5, 11 18 6 6 10 3 6 10 9 14 4 13 9 5

18 15, 3 8 5 15 9 8 6 10 2 15 15 4 8 3 15 3 8

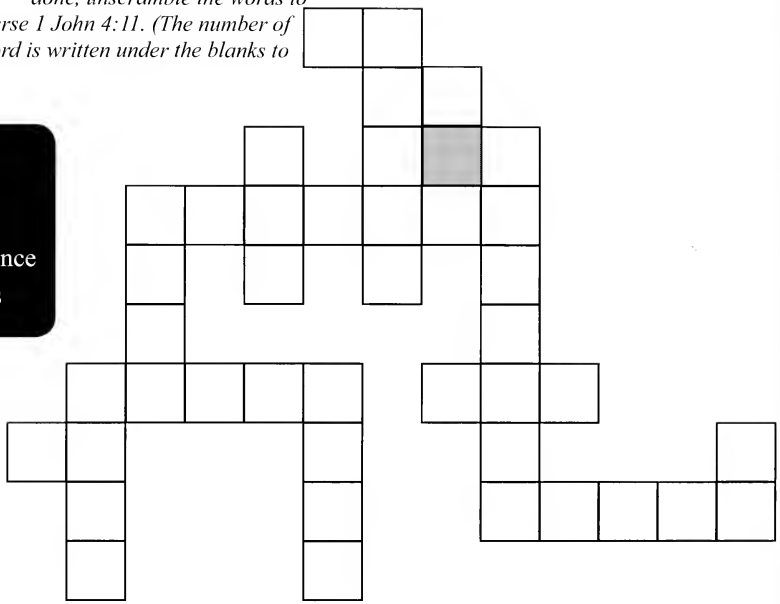
3 6 4 8 2 8 15 3 17 12 2 1 2 17 9 1 4 12 4 18 12

15 2 8 15. *1 John 4:10*

Fit these words

in the puzzle. When you're done, unscramble the words to make the Bible verse 1 John 4:11. (The number of letters in each word is written under the blanks to help you.)

2: so, to, us, we
3: God, one
4: also, dear, love
5: loved, ought, since
7: another, friends



(4) (7) (5) (3) (2) (5)

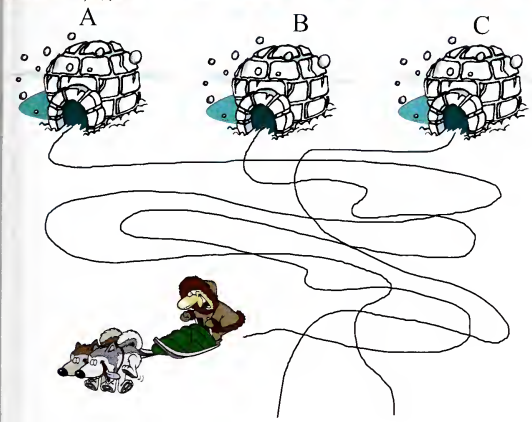
(2) (2) (4) (5) (2) (4) (3) (7)



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell



Back Home

Larry woke up late, and his two friends have started on their fishing trip without him. Can you find which igloo Larry was staying in?

Cross Out

Cross out all the words that apply to the items listed. (Some words may apply more than once.) When you are done, read the words left from top left to bottom right. It will be 1 John 4:19.

Cross out all that are:

1. animals
2. numbers
3. words with 2 of the same vowels at the end
4. body parts
5. words that rhyme
6. 3-letter words

horse	hands	plan	tree	we	cow	love	cats
cart	because	one	calves	three	he	first	eleven
too	shampoo	heart	mad	fish	four	bird	through
loved	who	was	Hawaii	leg	poor	us	can

Have a Heart

In this pile of candy hearts there are two hearts that are the same color and have the same message. Can you find the two hearts?



"Back Home" answer is "B"

and our WHFMS in America took on the care of 100 orphans.

In 1904 the WHFMS rented and furnished a home for the Boston Bible School, which later became the New England School of Theology and then Berkshire Christian College. All work in India was placed under the WHFMS in 1906. In 1910, the WHFMS purchased a Headquarters building at 5 Whiting Street in Boston, MA. At this time the membership had reached 3,200 members.

During the first half of the 20th century, WHFMS not only carried responsibility for Advent Christian work in India, but much of the burden for mission education within the Advent Christian Church. In 1958, oversight and supervision for Advent Christian mission work in India was transferred to the American Advent Mission Society.

In 1966 delegates to the WHFMS convention adopted this new organizational philosophy:

The WHFMS is an organization of the women of the Advent Christian denomination interested in the total denominational program, and dedicated to spreading the "Gospel of the Kingdom" throughout the world. Its responsibility and mission shall be the organization of Christian women to a vital, spiritual, educational, financial and numerical force to further the total program of the denomination."

"The restructuring was intended to encourage WHFMS growth..."

Three years later, WHFMS offices were moved to the new denominational office building in Charlotte, NC. The Year 1976 marked a major change in the relationship of WHFMS to the Advent Christian General Conference. Delegates to the WHFMS biennial convention voted to implement the Advent Christian denominational reorganization ratified two years earlier.

The Massachusetts Corporation known as the "WHFMS of the Advent Christian Church" was dissolved. WHFMS became a part of and subject to the jurisdiction of the Advent Christian General Conference of America, Inc. The title of Executive Secretary was changed to Director of Women's Work and one year later this office was broadened to include all areas of women's ministries within the Advent Christian General Conference. At this time over 3,300 Advent Christian women were active in 215 local WHFM societies. Today WHFMS membership has dropped to 1,393 members in 102 locals. This is less than half the membership we had in 1976. What has happened?

When restructuring took place, the WHFMS became one group under the umbrella of the Office of Women's Ministries, a group with a focus on "missions". The restructuring was intended to encourage WHFMS growth as well as other areas of women's ministries in the denomination. We do know that as of today the WHFMS is the only national

organization of women in the Advent Christian denomination. In fact, when the Coordinator of Women's Ministries recently surveyed AC churches to identify other active women's ministry groups, there was no response.

"We must ask ourselves why our numbers have dropped so drastically since the late seventies."

We must ask ourselves why our numbers have dropped so drastically since the late seventies.

First, Satan knows his time is limited and is doing everything he can to delay the completion of the Great Commission. Lorry Lutz in her book, *Women as Risk-Takers for God*, wrote:

> *"Probably one of the saddest accounts of how the attitude of church leaders limited and affected women's roles in ministry is the story of 20th century missions in North America. By 1929, 67% of all foreign missionaries from the United States were women and over 40 women's mission boards had been formed. Women recruited single missionaries, sent them out to work primarily with women and children, financed them and organized national prayer movements. The World Day of Prayer was founded by the Federation of Women's Boards and the Council of Women for Home Missions in 1919.*



Former coordinator of women's ministries, Mrs. Hazel Blackstone and President of the national board of WH & FMS, Mrs. Randee Davis

> *"But leaders of the mainline churches resisted this movement, opposing the appearance of women in public meetings, and their assumption of leadership roles in churches on the mission fields.*
>
> *"The mainline mission boards began increasing pressure on*

the women's organizations to merge. In 1884 the Methodist Church drew up a new constitution which brought the women's organization under its rule. It took all the initiative and power from the women, deprived them of effective administration and ended their appointment and assignment of women missionaries."

Women have historically been treated as inferior in many cultures and in the church. "Yet," Lutz concludes,"Jesus gave dignity and worth to every woman he met. He touched the bleeding woman. He honored the poor widow. He taught women who followed him, breaking Jewish traditions. He discussed theology with an immoral woman. He appeared first to a woman and instructed her to inform his male disciples of His resurrection. Obviously no circumstance of birth or life lessened the concern and respect Jesus showed women when He walked on earth." We also know that wherever Christianity has gone in the world that the plight of women has improved.

As a woman, I have never felt anything but encouragement to use my gifts and opportunities for the Lord in the Advent Christian Church. But I do know that there are churches in our denomination where the WHFMS is not welcome and women are not encouraged to take leadership roles.

"I believe we must have a clear vision of who we are, what our mission is and how we can accomplish it.

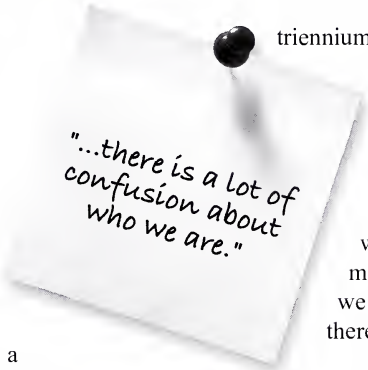
I do not believe that restructuring WHFMS as a part of and subject to the jurisdiction of the Advent Christian General Conference of America, Inc., in 1976 was an attempt to weaken the work of this organization. In 2002, the women of WHFMS reported giving $195,584.72 to ministry. $19,500 of this was undesignated giving to United Ministries. $27,000 was designated giving to United Ministries, and almost $30,000 was given for Christmas in October. We have increased our support of denominational ministries. Still, our numbers have continued to fall. What can we do to counter this decline?

I believe we must have a clear vision of who we are, what our mission is and how we can accomplish it. Shortly after I became national president, Hazel Blackstone, Coordinator of Women's Ministries, asked me to write an article for the *AC Witness* about my vision for the WHFMS. I thought I knew what my vision was. I was wrong.

In November of 2002, I traveled to Seattle, WA, for WHFMS Program Kit Committee meetings. The first day I visited in the home of Kathleen and Clio Thomas, who is the Asian/Pacific Area Director. One of the first things Kathleen asked me was, **"What's the difference between Women's Ministries and WHFMS?"** I explained to the best of my ability.

The next morning I joined eight ladies around a table in Bellingham, WA, with the program committee. Almost immediately

Beverly Teshera, wife of George Teshera and long time WHFMS member asked, **"What's the difference between Women's Ministries and WHFMS?"** I once again explained to the best of my ability.



One thing became very clear to me. There is a lot of confusion about who we are. Even after 24 years, it is not clear to our membership what our relationship with Women's Ministries is. We have lost our sense of identity, mission and purpose. I also found that each regional organization has a different view of WHFMS.

Today we have a wonderful relationship with the Office of Women's Ministries. The WHFMS and Office of Women's Ministries provide materials for women's groups, King's Jewels, Junior Action and YWA. Women's Ministries also provides a monthly "Prayer and Praise" brochure linking women with up-to-date prayer needs on our mission fields and the home front. Inspirational articles of interest to WHFMS and women's groups are featured in the *AC Witness*. The department makes available materials for workshops to enhance women's societies. "Christmas in October" is sponsored by WHFMS and funds from the campaign are distributed to our missionaries as holiday gifts. The WHFMS and the Coordinator of Women's Ministries work together to plan and coordinate the Advent Christian Women's Conference each triennium.

In March 2003, the National WHFMS Board and the Coordinator of Women's Ministries pondered the following questions: Who are we? Where are we going? What must we do to get there? And, are we willing to change in order to get there?

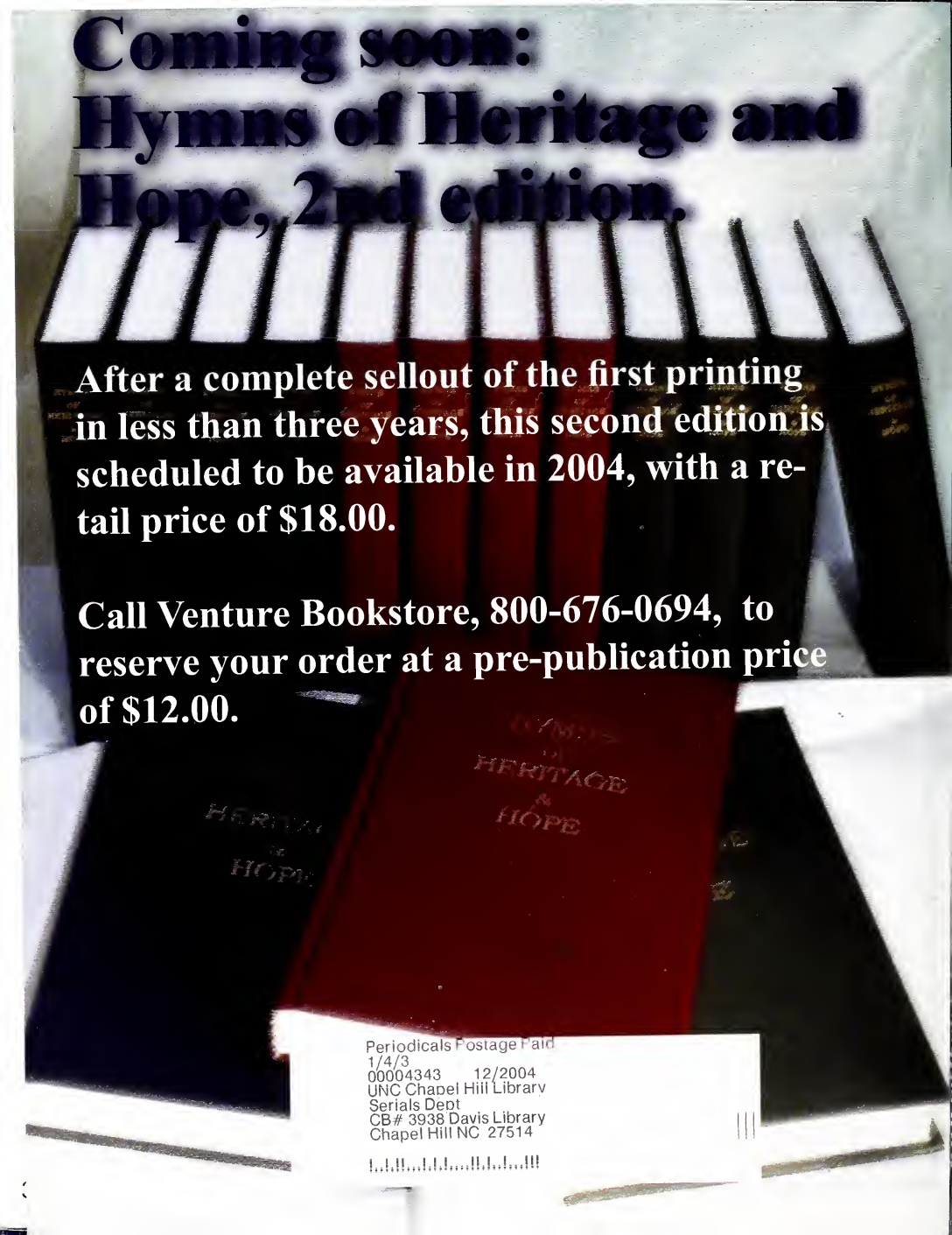
We are the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society and our mission is to equip, encourage and enable all Advent Christian women to use their gifts and opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ faithfully, urgently and sacrificially until He comes. This would include our sisters on any foreign field who wish to become part of our organization. In doing this our beloved Woman's Home and Foreign Society would become a **WORLD MISSION SOCIETY.**

Are we willing to change in order to accomplish our goals? Would we be willing to change our name to include women all over the world? Would we be willing to re-state our goals and mission statement in a way that younger women might better identify with us? How far are we willing to go to see that our task is carried out? Can WHFMS become WMS?

God is calling the whole church to take the gospel to the whole world. Let's continue to be a part of the Great Commission.✝

Randee Davis, the National WHFMS President, resides in Hudson, NC, with her husband, Harold.

Coming soon: Hymns of Heritage and Hope, 2nd edition.



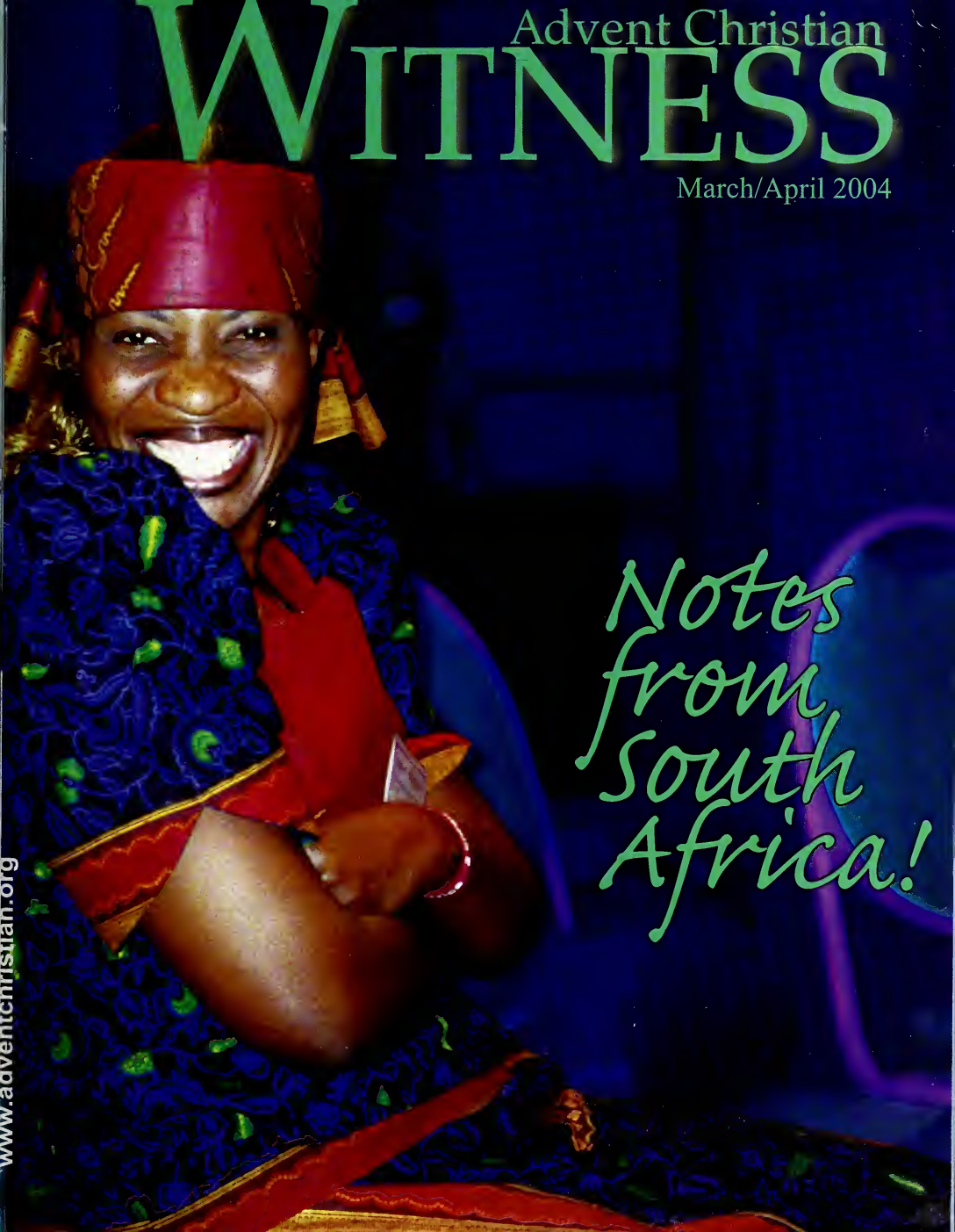
After a complete sellout of the first printing in less than three years, this second edition is scheduled to be available in 2004, with a retail price of $18.00.

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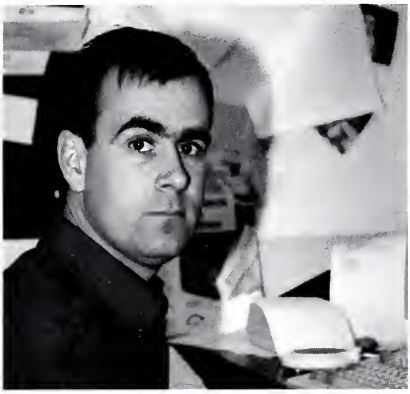
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From the Editor



"So doctor, can I start training for a triathlon?"

"Sure, you can do anything any other normal person can do; just *no straining*."

My neurologist had just given me the good news that my most recent MRI showed a "dramatic improvement" in my torn artery. After five months of worrying about a stroke or death, it was an unspeakable relief to hear a doctor assure me that I was going to be fine.

But his last two words vexed me—"no straining." What does that mean? I'm the kind of person who strains all the time. Like Avis rental car, I "try harder" at everything I do. Call it compensation for lack of talent. I don't have perfect pitch, so I practice longer. I'm not naturally athletic, so I run faster. I'm not naturally perspicacious, so I study harder (and look up more words in the dictionary!)

For people like me, "no straining" may be impossible. We plodders know our only hope of achieving excellence is tied to a protestant-work-ethic mentality that demands we give it our all. Before my artery tore, I was following an exercise regimen based on the notion that "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger." Of course, I had an addendum to Nietzsche's famous line: "whatever doesn't *almost* kill me is not really helpful."

Now, I'm discovering the truth of another twentieth century philosopher who stated, "A man's gotta' know his limitations" (Dirty Harry). If my neurologist and a larger-than-life rogue cop played by Clint Eastwood weren't persuasive enough, another MD has framed the same wisdom with a spiritual context. In his book *Margin,* Dr. Richard Swenson reveals the unpopular truth that human beings cannot function well with ever-increasing demands on time, energy, emotions, or money. In his follow-up devotional guide (*A One-Minute Margin*) he states:

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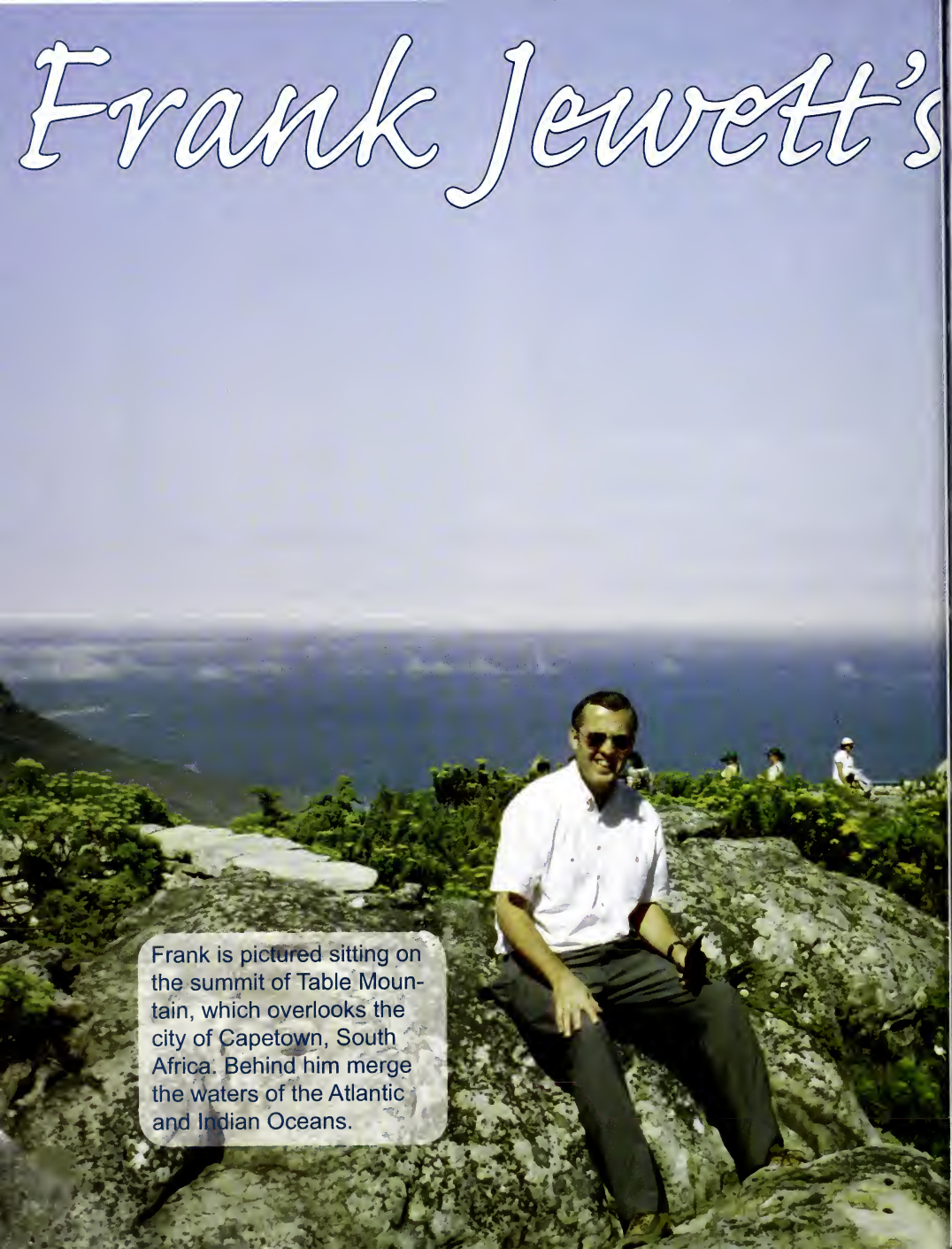
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Cover photo: One of the attendees at the Advent Christian leadership conference in South Africa. Photo by Rev. Frank Jewett.

Frank Jewett's



Frank is pictured sitting on the summit of Table Mountain, which overlooks the city of Capetown, South Africa. Behind him merge the waters of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

Notes from South Africa

In November 2003, Frank Jewett, Area Director for Africa and Europe, led a mission trip to Namibia and Cape Town. The mission team included Harold "Hat" Turner, elder at Oxford A. C. Church in Maine (where Pastor Frank serves); Pastor Sam Warren of the West Jacksonville A.C. Church in Florida; and David Garufi, a deacon from Sam's church.

These photos and excerpts from Pastor Frank's journal will give you a taste of the blessings and challenges of short-term missions as well as a glimpse of the great need in South Africa.

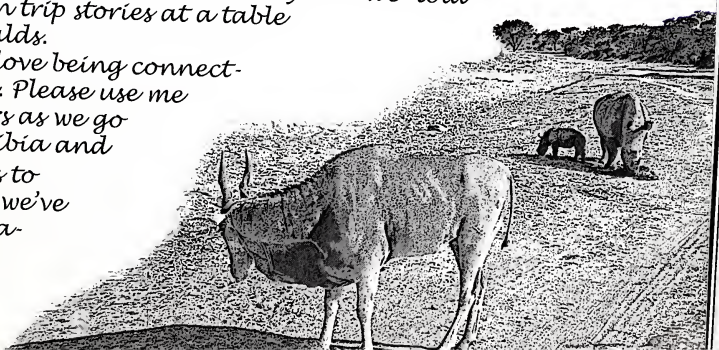
Ready to leave the U.S.A.

Thursday, 11-6-03,

2:30pm – *My wife Judy, Hat, and I are at the bus station in Portland, Maine. The bus gets to Logan Airport in Boston at 5:45. I think we're ready. God knows what's happening. I'm so thrilled he does.*

7:30pm – *Sam and David were waiting at the airport by the door. It was good seeing them. We had prayer together. I believe David is prayed up for this trip. It was fun teasing Sam about the hotel change. He said, "You're not making us stay at a hotel like the one in Liberia, are you?" We told old mission trip stories at a table at McDonalds.*

Lord, I love serving you. I love being connected with you wherever I am. Please use me to encourage these brothers as we go to equip the saints in Namibia and Cape Town. It's 3,280 miles to London from Boston. Then we've got another ten hours to Namibia via Johannesburg.













Theopolina and Badiru Masudi (above) are lay leaders in the Blessed Hope Fellowship Church in Windhoek, Namibia. Badiru is an elder in the church. Yvonne Yvy Hangara (right) is the worship leader at Blessed Hope Fellowship Church.

Pictured at top are Frank Jewett, Sam Warren, Harold "Hat" Turner, and David Garufi. Rev. Elton Young (above right) pastors a church in the Dunoon area of Capetown. The upper left photo shows Sam leading one of the conference meetings.

In London, England

Saturday, 11-8-03

12:52am – *We've returned from a day of touring London. We did the London Eye, the world's largest observatory wheel, across the river from Westminster Abbey. We had English fish & chips and took a double-decker bus to the Tow Loop - all very interesting.*

There seems to be a real peace among the team. Those praying for us are making a tremendous difference. Sam says every mission trip he's taken has contributed to his growth in Christ. It's rewarding to be a part of such things.

In Namibia, South Africa

Saturday, 11-8-03

9:35pm – *We're in Windhoek ("Vinhook"), Namibia's capital. There's a strong Dutch influence here. In 1999 Namibia was voted the cleanest city in Africa. Its economy is on the upswing. Trade, minerals and tourism are big here. We flew British Air. All of us had comfortable seats, except Sam, who was sitting between two big ball players that sprawled all over him.*

Sunday, 11-9-03

morning – *Over breakfast Hat and I talked about church issues at home. We love those people and are praying that this morning will be a special time at the Oxford Church. We saw baboons walking across the road. My cold is leaving. Thank you Lord.*

We'll visit the Namibian church. I'm looking forward to hearing Moses preach. Tonight I'll speak.



3:00pm – *Valentine took us to the Blessed Hope Fellowship Church in Wamaheda. Yvonne led the singing and worship. Moses spoke. The entire service was wonderful. Almost everything is in English because there are people from many language groups attending. The pastor encourages those who are not proficient in English to sit next to someone who can translate.*

The church sent an evangelism team to a Congo city called Lubumbashi. They put up big beautiful posters to promote the crusade. I gave $100 of denominational money to help.

10:00pm – *Valentine drove us to church. Sam preached. Great worship! Today I felt closer to Christ than I have for months. Moses led part of the service. He's a great leader in all ways. I think we'll have nine ladies in the training session this week. The protocol and courtesy given to the leaders is noteworthy. They carry our bags and Bibles. They give us water at the pulpit and at our seats. This makes it easier for a preacher to concentrate.*

Monday, 11-10-03

6:00pm – *We had a good time worshiping this evening. We threw our burdens down in a big pile and then picked up someone else's to pray. Patrick is a converted Muslim in the conference. He and others are praying for their families.*

Several of us didn't feel good today; maybe it's something we ate. Sam was too sick to come with us. We toured central Windhoek with Moses in the afternoon. Namibia is very clean on the outside, but is full of AIDS. It's having devastating results. Illicit sex is out of control here.

Tuesday, 11-11-03

3:30pm – *Sam had a long night; he threw up seven times. He says he feels 1000% better than yesterday. He was able to do his teaching. Sam is a great communicator of the Word. I haven't been as sick. I called Judy to ask her to get people to pray that we'll feel better.*

8:45pm – *The phone call home for prayer is working. Sam and I are feeling better. Praise God! Great worship this evening. Thank you, Lord, for joining us in these meetings. Several men have shared their desire to be brought up to a new level in Christ.*

Wednesday, 11-12-03 – *All of us are feeling a bit better. God is hearing the prayers of folks back home. We're having another beautiful sunrise. We slept well last night.*

In the afternoon we traveled to the Okapuka Reserve where we were saw giraffe, sable, mongoose, roebuck, ibex, wildebeest, crocodile, and hippos. A twenty-day-old hippo was the star of the show. Well worth the $18 admission.

This evening I asked folks to share a reason why God sent them to the conference. They gave some great responses: rest, time away to read and meditate, opportunity to get to know brothers and sisters, learning Bible truth, seeing the importance of sound doctrine.

1:30am – *The teaching went well. People seem interested in the subject of death and what it really involves.*

Thursday, 11-13-03 – *In the afternoon meeting we dealt with integrity and truthfulness. Moses seems to be a transparent leader. The $100 we send the conference monthly barely meets his needs. His refrigerator is often empty, but he continues to do ministry. We spoke of the Advent Christian structure in the U.S. and the shrinking cash flow coming from there.*

Friday, 11-14-03

5:00pm – *We're done. It was a great conference. All twenty delegates were thrilled and had great questions. But several people related stories of people who claim they died and saw heaven or hell and then returned to life. Sam really hit the "sound doctrine" theme and warned against being swayed by sensationalistic stories.*

We had delegates from Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, and Angola. The Holy Spirit also worked through our people to minister to several guests at the facility, people from Ghana, Germany, India, the DRC, Burundi, and Angola, to name a few.

The closing celebration with the delegates was simple, but special. All but a few had perfect attendance and a gold seal on their certificates.

Sam took me with him to play golf. Now we can boast of playing golf in Africa. There were small fox/ferret type animals everywhere on the course. Namibia doesn't feel very African. It has a lot of European influence; many of the merchants are Europeans.

Saturday, 11-15-03

11:30am – *We're sitting at the airport in Windhoek. Our plane was canceled because it was hit by lightning. Thank God we weren't on it! The airport director says we'll be the first to board a plane to Johannesburg at 3:30 and that we can get a connection to Cape Town, so we may get to see Nathan Fernando there.*

In Johannesburg, South Africa

5:00pm – *We're in Johannesburg. The flight to Cape Town left before we could get through customs and catch it. This is the third flight we've missed on the Namibia leg. We're now waiting*

for a 6:00 flight.

I catch myself asking the Lord to manifest his presence. Every time he does. Lord, I thank you for answering my prayers.

In Cape Town, South Africa

Sunday, 11-16-03

8:00am – *We made it to Cape Town, in the Lord's strength. It took twelve hours and two missed flights to travel what should have only taken two hours. Pastor Elton Young was at the airport waiting for us. He's taking us to the 10:30 service.*

This city is modern and beautiful and the weather is perfect. But there are huge homosexual problems and corruption. Next week there'll be a vote on a law to penalize clergy if they refuse to marry gay couples.

4:00pm – *We attended Elton's church in Dunoon - a crowded settlement northwest of the city. The church meets in an old military tent that was given by Project Judea (out of Canada). There were about thirty people in service. He's trying to get a piece of land for $3,571 (U.S.). A good spot for a church, but it probably won't be Advent Christian. Anything Elton learned from Clio and me a couple years ago seems to have been forgotten. He warns people that, "To keep your salvation you must go out to witness," otherwise "you'll burn forever in hell."*

I wish he could understand the word "perish" in God's Word. God sent his Son to die and rise again so that all who trust him will not perish. Many theological systems change the meaning of that and other words to make Scripture fit their bias. I believe Advent Christian theology is fully Biblical on this issue.

Monday, 11-17-03

3:00pm – *Early this morning we had the amazing experience of being carried up Table Mountain by aerial tram, to see the most incredible view of the entire Cape Town area, including Cape Point, where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Indian Ocean. What a treat the Lord allowed us! I kept thinking of his majesty as I looked over the edge, at 3,500 feet elevation.*

9:00pm – *We asked Clive, our driver, where to go for dessert, for something squishy and soft. He turned the car and headed for "Paradise." Thank God, we didn't arrive! It's a place*

where Christians should never go! We were thinking of ice cream, cake, and snickers. When Clive finally realized what we wanted, he was embarrassed and took us to Spurs Restaurant. Thank you, Lord, for praying partners who helped to keep us away from the wrong kind of "Paradise."

Tuesday, 11-18-03

5:00pm – *I gave Elton $100 for his help with transportation. Sam thinks that Elton might change his doctrine if we follow through with his promises, education, etc. We'll see.*

Wednesday, 11-19-03

9:00am – *We were up early. I'm just about adjusted to the time difference here now and today we're headed back west for another seven-hour change. My poor body gets frustrated with me at times.*

7:15pm – *The British Air 747 just landed. We're all waiting here with boarding passes. In half an hour or so they will be loading. We're getting close. David shared his testimony with us, how God has saved him from a life of destruction in drugs and alcohol.*

Heading home

Thursday, 11-20-03

8:30am – *We arrived in London at 6:30am - an eleven-hour trip. I slept pretty well on the plane and had a good time praying this morning, practicing some of the contemplation techniques that Dr. Demarest talks about in a book I'm reading. We have a three-hour layover before heading for America. We're all ready to go home. It's been a long trip.*

The need in South Africa is very great. 11% of the population is infected with AIDS. The average life span there is 46½ years. "In this country, coffin making and funeral directing are growth industries" (USA Today Nov. 20, 2003). My prayer is that the gospel of Jesus will become the greatest growth industry there. May the Lord use Advent Christians to help make it happen.✞



Death opens doors for ministry

By Dr. Nelson B. Melvin

A sixteen-year-old boy was killed in a one-car crash. His father (a Methodist minister), his mother, and grandmother had come to the United States from Cambodia. Relatives and friends came to the funeral home and mourned their loss for three days, as was their custom. I will never forget the grandmother, dressed in black, draping herself over her grandson's casket and wailing day after day. It was heart wrenching.

Following the funeral service, the funeral director and I had to roll the casket into the dressing room and snip the wire that held his mouth closed before going to the cemetery. The Humongs, a Cambodian tribal group, believe that a person's spirit can only depart through an open mouth. This was a classic case of co-mingling primitive culture and Christianity, polluting the pure promise of the blessed hope of Christ's return and our future resurrection.

While American funeral practices may not seem quite so odd to us, our culture has also greatly distorted the biblical message about death and what God promises for the future. There is a great need for careful teaching about what Scripture really says, so that people will be better prepared to deal with death and the loss of a loved one.

For the past seven years, I've served as Pastoral Care Coordinator for a funeral home in Charlotte, North Carolina. Perhaps my experiences will be helpful to readers who want to be better equipped to minister to people in their time of loss.

What can we say or do?

You may feel uncomfortable in the presence of death and not know what to say. But words are not as important as your presence. Simply let the bereaved know that you are there for them.

My father was pastor of an Advent Christian church in Watertown, Wisconsin, when my mother died at the age of fifty-one. Most of the other pastors in town came by the parsonage to express their sympathy, but I only remember one of them. A Moravian pastor came to the door, embraced Dad, and kissed him on both cheeks, while tears trickled down his own cheeks. When this man had been a missionary in the New Hebrides, he'd made the coffin and dug the grave for his own beloved companion. He didn't need to say anything; we knew he understood.

Our eighteen year-old son, Paul, died while he was a student at Aurora College. Friends and former parishioners of ours there in Aurora, Illinois, were very supportive; however, one stands out. As we were entering the funeral home for the viewing, a number of people were leaving; among them was Henry Hurlbet. He threw his arms around me and pressed his wet cheek against mine, then moved on without a word. I remembered that Henry had lost a son in World War II. Words were not necessary. I knew he understood and cared.

When you are engaged in conversation with the bereaved, take care not to turn the focus to a previous time of sorrow in your own life. Be a good listener. Rather than asking if there is anything you can do, suggest a specific need that you might be able to fill. Offer to provide food, childcare, a guest-room for an out of town relative, or help with transportation. Anticipate a need and offer to fill it.

Tips for pastors

While words are not always necessary for a friend of the family, the pastor has to say something at the memorial service. That task is easier when a godly person dies. The saint has lived out a personal message and the service can celebrate that life.

It's not the right time to try to correct everyone's beliefs about what happens after death, although the pastor certainly will want to emphasize the blessed hope of the believer – our resurrection to immortality at Christ's return. And faithful pastors will want to do whatever they can to comfort those who feel the loss most keenly.

The more difficult services are for people whose lives produced little or no evidence of a personal relationship with the One who is the way, the truth and the life. I've conducted funerals for atheists, a murderer, and people whose immoral lifestyle caused their death by AIDS. I steer clear of judging. I learn as much as possible about the person who died so that I can personalize the message; then I share whatever positive information about the deceased that I know.

I also tell what God has prepared for those who put their trust in Jesus. I try not to give false hope, as if everyone will gain eternal life; but I do my best to present the Gospel. That doesn't mean that I can prevent a false impression from being conveyed if others speak at the service. I once conducted a memorial service at a farm where the deceased man and his buddies had often gone hunting. The family had told me nothing that would indicate he was a Christian. I did my best to clearly present the Gospel, but after a shotgun salute and the scattering of his cremains, one of the men raised his hand heavenward and proclaimed, "Now he's in a better place."

Good news for the non-religious

One family told the funeral director that neither the deceased nor they were religious. I wondered why they wanted the help of a Christian minister.

At the service, I suggested why it was of value for us to be together in the chapel. First, I said, it was appropriate to celebrate the life and accomplishments of this man who had touched their lives significantly. He held more than eighty patents for inventions that had improved the lives of many people. Second, the service provided an opportunity for friends to share in the family's sorrow and to provide comfort. Finally, I reminded those present that our quiet moments in the chapel gave us each an opportunity to think seriously about our values, priorities – and eternity. I confessed that I too was not a "religious person" in the way most people think of religion. I explained the contrast between religious efforts to earn God's approval and the truth of the Incarnation: how our loving God came to us in Jesus, through whose death and resurrection we are offered the gift of eternal life.

A tough looking cowboy

The time of sorrow can be a moment of great opportunity. A man came in several hours before the scheduled visitation for his deceased friend. He was dressed country style with a black western hat. His arms were tattooed from the elbows down. This rough looking dude stood by his friend's casket for several minutes and then blurted out, "He looks good. What did you do to him?" Then he said, "When my time comes, just put me in a cheap box and throw some dirt on me. I don't want some preacher saying stuff over me. I've got enough to answer for."

God gave me a burden for him and on church visitation night, a couple went with me to his house. It was in a dangerous part of town and was dimly lit. There in his living room, we saw a picture of "Christ Knocking at the Door" leaning against the coffee table. He told us it had fallen off the wall without breaking the night before. Then he told us how his wife had died of cancer and how his son, who was on drugs, had shot himself. Our cowboy friend said he was so depressed after those losses, that he'd aimed a .357 magnum at his head and pulled the trigger. "Click." He tried again: "click...click." Then he pointed the gun toward the ground – and that time it fired. God graciously spared his life so that we could have the privilege of leading him to Jesus that night.

An Alzheimer's patient

The death of a woman seemed imminent when the family made plans for her funeral. She had Alzheimer's and other life threatening health problems. I visited her at a nursing home several times. One afternoon, her husband, whom I had recently led to Christ, asked, "Reverend, do think she will go to Heaven? She was a good woman, but I have never heard her confess Christ." I said, "Let's see what God can do." A day earlier she hadn't been able to even recognize her husband. But as he reminded her who I was and asked if she understood, she said, "Yes." It seemed that God had pulled back the curtain of her confusion and opened a window of opportunity. I asked her if she loved Jesus and wanted to receive Him as her Savior. Her answer was a clear, "Yes."

I conducted her funeral a week later. A few months have passed since then, but on a recent Sunday two of her grandchildren were baptized and twelve members of her family filled a pew.

A country club member

A man came to the funeral home to make arrangements for his mother who was seriously ill. He told me she had been a golf enthusiast and country club member. He questioned whether she was saved, because she was not open to his witnessing efforts. I went to visit her and her husband and was politely received, but interruptions prevented me from talking with them about the Lord. A few days later, I learned that she was in the hospital.

When I arrived in her dimly lit room that night she was in extreme pain, so I prayed for relief. A few minutes later I left. After I had driven six miles toward home, the Holy Spirit said," You didn't ask her the important question." I returned to her hospital room and told her that I wanted to be certain that she

would spend eternity with Jesus. In the midst of her pain, she confessed Jesus as her Savior. Two hours later she died.

At her memorial service the church was filled with people from the country club and I had the great privilege of sharing the Gospel with them.

Preparing for eternity

After the death of an older woman, family members came to the funeral home three evenings in a row. They would have stayed all night had we allowed it. The last night, at 11:00 p.m., I stepped into the chapel and noticed one of the daughters stuffing clothes under the casket mattress. I raised it to make her task easier and I asked why she was doing that. She explained, "It's a long way to Heaven. She's going to need a change of clothes."

In addition to the clothes, she had included a twenty-dollar bill, a bottle of aspirin, and a package of cigarettes. With a friendly smile, I told her that Heaven will be smoke free and there will be no headaches there. Her mother wouldn't need the aspirin or the cigarettes. Later, I tried to point those family members to the Savior.



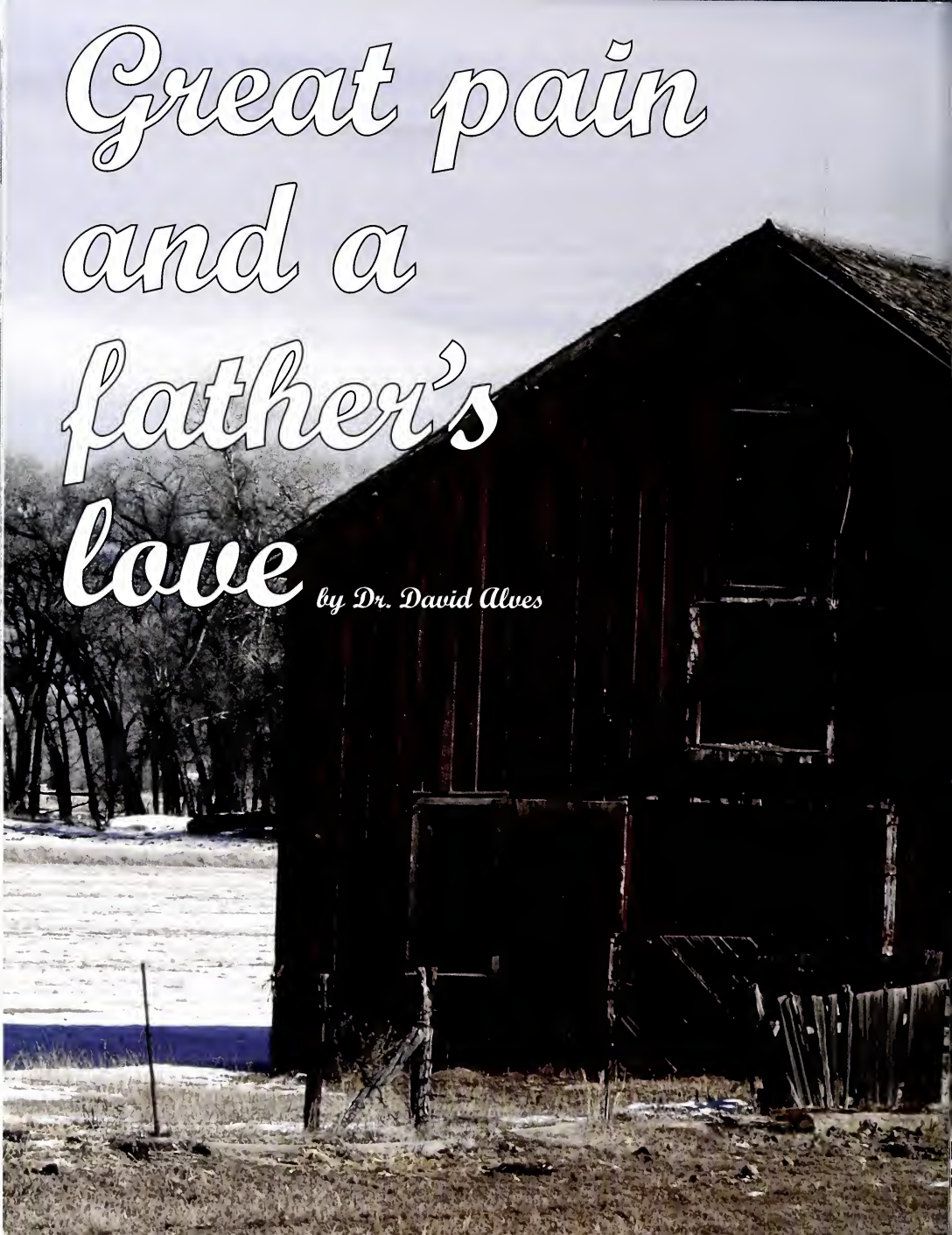
We might be amused at the naive notion that extra clothes, money, and other items would benefit a deceased person. But, our smiles will fade when we remember that millions of people make no adequate spiritual preparation for death.

God has given us a blessed hope; it is urgent that we share that good news with joy and bold enthusiasm. As we cross the path of people who have lost a loved one, we have a wonderful opportunity to express Christ's love and truth. ✞

Dr. Melvin was ordained as an Advent Christian minister in 1944, and is a former editor of the Advent ChristianWitness magazine. He is visitation pastor and minister with senior adults at Blair Road United Methodist Church in Mint Hill, North Carolina, and also serves as Pastoral Care Coordinator for Lowe Funeral Home in Charlotte, N.C.

Great pain and a father's love

by Dr. David Alves





Homer Wells is a fictional character in the novel, Cider House Rules, by John Irving. Homer grows up in an orphanage in Maine. The doctor, who runs the place, becomes like a father to the orphaned children, and tries his best to instill a sense of self-esteem in them. At bedtime, when he turns out the lights, he always says, "Goodnight, you princes and princesses of New England."

The doctor understood how an orphan could have a wounded spirit, and a deep need for affirming love and emotional healing. The same might be said for "spiritual orphans" who are born into this fallen world, without knowing God as our Father. For that reason, most of our readers should be able to identify with the pain and the healing that David Alves has experienced.

Fathers don't come easy. It started at an orphanage. Much like Homer Wells, who grew up in an orphanage in St. Clouds, Maine – yet quite different, too. In Homer's case, nothing was real, just a product of John Irving's imagination. But for me, it was all too real.

(Continued next page)

Someone once told me that great pain produces a compassionate heart; that our pain makes us real. I only know that it can just as often wound our spirits and begin a lifetime of struggle and despair.

I at least had a makeshift family of foster parents for a time. I really can't remember how many; but it continued for almost four and a half years. I do remember being inspected, like fruit, by weekend couples shopping for kids. And us combing our hair, brushing our teeth, washing our faces – wanting to put our best foot forward.

My adopted mother, Betty, told me (4/7/00) that I had been in at least two other homes of couples that wanted to adopt me, but they gave me back when they learned how difficult I was. Apparently, I turned blue…frequently. They thought I had epilepsy and placed me on medication. Betty said that she, a social worker, and a nurse concurred that medication was not the answer. Though my EEG was abnormal, epilepsy was ruled out. But before Betty adopted me permanently, the nurse took me in.

I remember the nurse. She was my "mom"—not really of course, but as close to really as a three year-old can comprehend. Her husband was in the oil delivery business or a farmer; I forget which. When I think back to him, I'm playing near a brook that runs through a lush green pasture. The big red barn is maybe fifty yards away. He comes. He's big, in farmer jeans. I don't see his face, only his old brown stained Stetson fedora. His face is a dark shadow beneath the brim. He's the only father I know at that point.

He hurries over and shouts at me for being near the water. He tells me that a monster or alligator will hurt me if I get too close.

I believe him. I'm scared…to death. My heart is racing.



He yells at me to get back to the house. As I pass by him, he jabs at my backside with a pitchfork. Not too hard, but I feel it bite into my bum. Then it feels warm and hot. I run and cry at the same time. I'm sobbing, heaving.

I run into the barn and crawl up into the hayloft. There I cry alone and wish I had a real mother to hold me, and a kind dad to protect me. Dust floats in shafts of light from holes in the roof. Hay and dry grass smells fill the thick air. I reach back to feel the pinch of something on my bum. My hands are wet. I'm bleeding. A pigeon coos. I cry louder, lying alone in the hay. A robin chirps outside somewhere. No one hears. No one knows. Unless…maybe God—my real Father—sees. I think he is here. They say he's always here, but he is strangely quiet.

Later the nurse-mom will yell at the farmer-dad and show him the holes in the seat of my pants, asking him what he was thinking when he did that. She didn't know I heard. Then she washes me, and puts something on the cuts that makes them sting. The holes are not that deep. I feel bad for him. He was scared that I might fall into the water. He was scared, like me.

I cry alone and wish I had a real mother to hold me, and a kind dad to protect me.

The State of Massachusetts stopped my real mom from coming to visit me because I cried too much when she came. She upset me with her strange ways and friends, first hugging me and crying…then yelling, "You don't love me anymore. You're forgetting me. You love your nurse instead."

She and her friends smelled of stale beer, cigars, and whiskey. It smelled that way all the time in my first home, long before. At some point, my siblings and I were taken away because of child-neglect and my mother was placed in a reformatory.

They stopped my younger brother Donald from visiting too. I used to beg to see him. But when he came I'd hit him in the face. I don't know why.

I didn't know about my sister Alice. She was only a year old. My adopted mother could have gotten her at the same time she got me. The social workers offered her to be with me. But my new adopted father, David, thought a baby would be too much for him and Betty, just starting out as young parents.

I also recently found out that I had a brother, Ernest, who was even younger than Alice. My older brother, Harold, died when he was eleven months old, just before I was born. So there were originally four children in my birth family. We all became wards of the state; so did eleven half-brothers and half-sisters after us.

David Alves, my father, was only twenty-four when he adopted me. He had just begun a new job; there was not much money available. He and Betty hoped they might have their own baby after they adopted me; that happens to a lot of couples. I can understand why they didn't feel they could keep my siblings and me together.

How odd not to clearly remember any beginnings. But I know now that God was with me. I had a vague sense of that even as a child; I could feel his presence.

I knew that God's hand was on me, even in the barn, where I lay bleeding and crying. I looked for him, though he was with me. I wanted to SEE him. I wanted to know what he thought of me. I longed for answers. But I didn't know how to find him. Yet, I could feel him . . . invisible, loving, and caring – protecting me through it all. It would be another twenty-three years before he would really reveal himself to my understanding.

I now understand that he is the Father-God who understands great pain. He is the One who endured the pain of giving his precious Son up to death so that others could find families. The Psalmist wrote of how "he puts the lonely in families."

He is the God of all comfort who has taught me that experiencing great pain and rejection can enable us to grow and learn to comfort other people who are in pain. He can work through the suffering of his sons and daughters to help make others whole.

Looking over my life, I see that rejection was my theme for too many years – until the One who announced that I am loved and accepted finally came to me. He placed me in a family. He taught me REAL love. That love I now share with those he brings my way.

So I, who cannot seem to have natural children of my own, have become a spiritual father to the fatherless and to many other Homer Wellses like myself. And God, the most perfect Father, has made us fatherless fathers and mothers to be princes and princesses of New England.✞



Dr. David Alves is pastor of New Life Fellowship (AC) in Concord, N.H. This article is an excerpt from David's forthcoming book, "God's Favorite Name: A Memoir of Intimacy with God."

"We are so accustomed to pushing the limits—even exalting that push—that we often completely skip over the fact that we do, in fact, have limits. We all do. It is undeniable. Everything on earth has limits."

Beyond stating the obvious facts, Dr. Swenson emphasizes the truth that God the Creator designed us with these limitations. If he had wanted us to do more he would have created us with more ability. Maybe some straining is simply failing to accept God's design.

I think a lot of Advent Christians are just like me. As a group, I think we're more like plodders than exceptionally gifted superstars. Our churches, conferences, regions, and even the national office are often tempted to try straining. Some of us feel that any ministry that doesn't kill us makes us stronger. And, any ministry that doesn't almost kill us isn't really worthwhile. So, whenever an opportunity arises to do just a little bit more, we jump on it.

A few months ago I received an e-mail from a missionary in Peru. He had seen our website and was thrilled to find an organization that shared his beliefs regarding conditional immortality. Unfortunately for him, his mission board does not agree with these beliefs. How easy it would be for ACGC to welcome him into our family! It probably wouldn't cost too much, and we'd have a whole new mission field opened up for us… a whole new continent! All it would take is just a little more belt-tightening, just a little more effort. (Are we straining yet?)

Churches face similar opportunities. I once pastored a church in a community full of young families. The need for a good licensed day-care ministry was obvious. As a church we were in an ideal position to provide this service. Several ladies in the congregation attended a state-sponsored workshop to explore the possibilities. After several meetings and much prayer we concluded that a pre-school wasn't a ministry we wanted to pursue. The ladies were willing. We had the facilities. The market was ripe. But no one felt any sense of the Lord's leading us into this ministry. Just because we could do it didn't mean we should do it. That decision was an uncommonly mature choice by a congregation to avoid strain. I wonder how many VBS's, revival services, homecomings, and cantatas are straining church members, simply because they believe "if the ministry doesn't kill me it will make me stronger. And if the ministry doesn't almost kill me it's not worth doing."

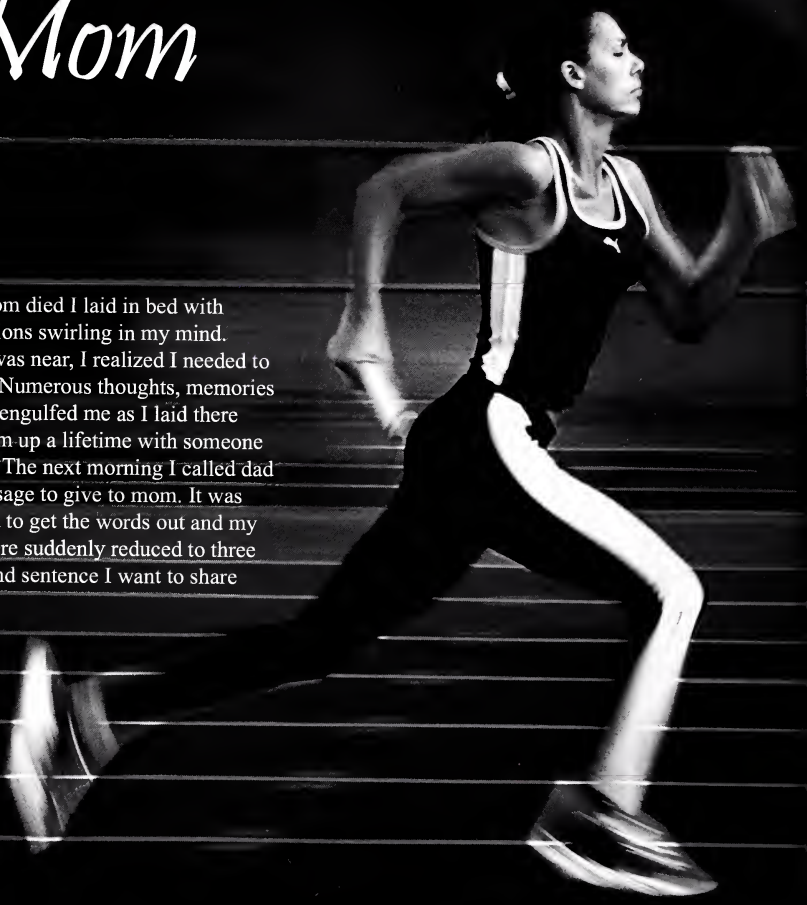
Advent Christian General Conference is straining today. ACGC's three directors struggle to provide the same types of service that were once provided by more than nine directors. Not too long ago the department of publications had five full-time employees. Today there's just one. And each day brings new opportunities to do just a little bit more, to work just a little bit harder because we know that "if the ministry doesn't almost kill me it's not worth doing."

In my recent attempts to return to training for a triathlon I purchased a heart rate monitor. I also checked out a library book that explains how checking one's heart rate can be used to improve exercise. Imagine my shock when I discovered that training at one's maximum heart rate is counterproductive! Apparently the body works optimally at 60 to 80 percent of its limits. When an athlete's heart rate reaches 90 percent, his body stops burning fat, and lactic acid begins to build up in his muscles. So now, if I really want to successfully complete a triathlon, I've got to teach myself to stop pushing the limits. I've got to convince myself that Nietzsche was wrong; whatever doesn't kill me may not make me stronger, it may just make me tired.

If I don't listen to my doctor and avoid straining the results could be fatal. I wonder if the same is true for churches, conferences, regions, and denominational offices.✞

To Mom

By Sharon Oster



The night before Mom died I laid in bed with thoughts and emotions swirling in my mind. Knowing that the end was near, I realized I needed to say one final goodbye. Numerous thoughts, memories and past conversations engulfed me as I laid there wondering how you sum up a lifetime with someone into one final goodbye. The next morning I called dad to give him a final message to give to mom. It was tougher then I expected to get the words out and my polished paragraphs were suddenly reduced to three sentences. It's the second sentence I want to share with you and explain.

"Tell mom I'm proud of her," I said. While I had a specific reason for saying that, I couldn't explain it then. Now I can.

I was proud of mom for finishing the race. It was not the image of her weak frail body that came to mind when I thought of Mom, but it was the image of an athlete. When we think of an ideal athlete we think of three things: One who has trained, one who is focused and one who has crossed the finish-line. That is why the athlete is a suitable image for mom. First, she trained. Though she had been in the church for many years, it was the cancer that gave new perspective and depth to her walk with the Lord. A refining process had begun. As the cancer progressed and she had to stop work a new work began, but it began with training. Mom said she needed to know Jesus, REALLY know him, and so she trained. She read the bible through cover-to-cover twice. She developed a prayer life with new fervor. This training refined her and renewed her.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

This verse played true in mom's life. Her body was visibly wasting away but something glorious was happening to the inward man. She was being renewed. She was being unloosed from chains of bondage. She was being set free from depression, free from resentments. She was becoming unencumbered so she could run the race God set out for her. God does not need whole healthy bodies to accomplish his work. His greatest work in Mom would happen while her body wasted away. With her Bible read twice and a new intimate prayer life, the inner man was healed. Yes, FULLY healed. Many of you prayed for her healing and thought God did not choose to heal her, but he did heal her. He healed the inner man completely. God cut the chains that bound her so she could run freely. That is healing. Now she would begin doing the work God gave her to do, Kingdom Work. Though doctors kept giving various time limits to her life, we quickly learned that she was not going to die until she was finished the work God gave her. Her life was not at the mercy of cancer, but her days and purpose were determined before the foundation of the world was laid.

During the last few years of her life she ministered to numerous people. Like an athlete she was focused. But her focus was on the work of the Kingdom. Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 4:18 saying, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Mom soon began to realize just how temporary our bodies are. Yet she knew that if she could help a friend come to the Lord then it was of eternal worth. Through God's help she ministered to more people then I am even aware of. She focused on the eternal.

My mom's final hours were spent in the hospital. I can only imagine what the young, strong-bodied nurses and hospital staff thought as they looked at the body of a 67 year-old women who had aged far beyond her years, whose body had been through countless rounds of chemotherapy, surgeries and radiation during the last nine years. Maybe these workers saw a person who had lost her value in society, or had become a burden. Whatever they saw I know it isn't what I saw. The day she died I saw her cross the finish line a strong and focused athlete, who could say, "I finished the race, I did all that you set before me. I was faithful because God is faithful."

And ultimately it does go back to God, because it is never the story of us alone. Our pastor in Rochester, New York, who also died of cancer, put it so aptly in a sermon in which he had shared about his cancer. He ended the message by saying "This is not the story of me, it's the story of Jesus. And that story applies to every cancer, every job, every family, every divorce, every sin that belongs to any of us. But to us who believe it's always Jesus' story, and Jesus' story carries beyond all of it."

To quote my mom:

"Jesus alone lends dignity to our suffering.
He becomes the bridge that makes us less a recipient of the curse
and more a participant in His suffering.
What an impact that transition from death to life makes in terms of eternity."

Sharon Oster is the Daughter of Rev. Ray and Patricia L. Penney, who fell asleep in Christ on March 17, 2004.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

The words echoed in my mind after many years. "I am willing, Lord, to be just exactly what you want me to be." How I remember this song from my college days, its simple, yet powerful message always tugging at my heart. I wasn't prepared for its return. As I wrestled with the invitation to serve as Interim President of the Advent Christian General Conference, I couldn't escape its magnitude.

Only a matter of months away from completing my tenure on the Executive Council, I was faced with a decision that would extend my service for another year. I had put in my time, paid my dues, given myself to the task. It was time for someone else to serve. Until that song! Was I really willing to be just exactly what He wanted me to be? Then the words of a hymn from my ordination service came to mind. "O Jesus, I have promised, to serve Thee until the end…" Inundated with songs from my past, the Lord was speaking more clearly than I wanted.

My inner struggles with this decision held a similar conclusion to the skirmishes of the soul faced by Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and other biblical personalities, including Jesus. There was no other decision. It wasn't about my will. It is always about the Lord's will. If I was unwilling to do what the Lord asked, how could I call myself His servant?

In this new calling, I resonate with Mary's response to God's will. "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Lk.1:38). My prayer is that the Lord will "give me grace to follow, My Master and my Friend."

May the Lord's blessing rest upon every servant throughout the Advent Christian Church as we begin our journey together!✞

Rev. Glenn Rice is pastor of Oak Hill Bible Church (AC) in Oxford, Mass. He is president of the Eastern Regional Association and was appointed interim-president of ACGC to serve the remainder of Rev. Ronald Thomas, Jr.'s term.

Twisted Scriptures

Rev. Tom Warner



A good friend of mine was delivered from heroin addiction, by the power of God; but, oddly enough, he finds that quitting smoking is very difficult. A few well-meaning Christians think they can help motivate smokers to quit by frightening them with 1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

> "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him…." (NKJ).

I certainly don't recommend smoking, but I believe that is a mistaken application of those verses. It is not threatening lung cancer as Divine retribution (although lung problems may, of course, be a natural consequence of smoking).

Paul's meaning can be seen in the context. He uses an extended analogy, calling the Corinthian congregation "God's building" (3:9), referring to himself a "master builder" who laid the "foundation" by preaching Christ (3:10-11). He speaks of other gospel ministers (such as Apollos, 3:5-6) who built upon the foundation (3:12), and how their good work will be tested and rewarded by the Lord (3:13-14). On the other hand, he says that poor-quality ministry will not be rewarded; such a minister, who belongs to Christ, will only barely be saved – like a man emerging from a burning house, without any possessions (3:15).

Then, Paul gives an even sterner warning: "Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God…God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple…" (3:16-17 NLT). The Greek word for "you" in verse 16 is plural, and the New Living Translation helps us see that. In the King James Version and American Standard Version, the old English plural "ye" is used (somewhat like the southern expression "you all"). Paul is picturing all the Corinthian believers as living stones in one spiritual temple, i.e., a Christian church (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-5).

Elsewhere in the same letter, in 6:18-20, Paul does speak of the individual Christian's body as a temple of God, and he warns against involving it in sexual immorality. But in 3:16 Paul refers to the larger temple – the church – and how a false teacher might defile, destroy, or ruin it.

For example, false teachers have ruined churches by teaching a false gospel, or promoting immorality. Those who destroy a church in such a way are in danger of eventually experiencing eternal destruction (cf. Matthew 7:13,15-23; 10:28; Galatians 1:8; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 3-13). To misappropriate this warning and apply it to smokers is clearly a misuse of the Scriptures.✞

Rev. Tom Warner is currently a chaplain with Ministry to the Aged, serving retirement homes and care centers in Boise, Idaho.

…things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

1 2   3 4 5 6   7 8 9   10 11 12

13 14 15 16 17   18 19 20   21 22 23 24 25 26

27 28 29   30 31 32 33   34 35 36 37   38 39

40 41 42   43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50. MARK 16:15

Put an A in lines 7, 18, 24, 40, 46
Put a C in lines 25, 43
Put a D in lines 17, 20, 33
Put an E in lines 12, 23, 29, 35, 45
Put a G in lines 1, 30
Put an H in lines 11, 26, 28
Put an I in lines 3, 48
Put an L in lines 8, 9, 16, 41, 42
Put an N in lines 4, 19, 34, 50
Put an O in lines 2, 6, 14, 31, 32, 39, 49
Put a P in line 21
Put an R in lines 15, 22, 44
Put an S in line 37
Put a T in lines 5, 10, 27, 38, 47
Put a W in lines 13, 36



Flowers in spring (potted, on trees, bushes, and vines)

Find the letters these letters represent. Once a letter is decoded, it remains the same throughout the list. Look for recurring combinations of letters or repeated letters. (Hint: G = A)

GPGBQG	BLBE	JGWLHSBX	IQANRLG
IGRKE	XGDDSXLB	XGRXQBLSR	XSHVSSX
VLKAQWLG	ANBLI		

Answers are given at the bottom of the next page



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Find the words below that are associated with Easter.

ANGEL
BASKET
BUNNY
EASTER
EGG
FLOWER
HOPE
JESUS
LIFE
SPRING
SUNRISE

B	F	L	O	S	L	E	S	B	U	N	N
A	U	O	G	E	E	A	P	U	K	G	J
Y	N	N	G	R	I	C	U	N	E	G	S
L	I	N	A	N	S	B	Y	N	A	E	G
B	A	S	K	E	T	E	A	Y	N	S	P
A	S	P	T	G	H	J	A	S	L	R	O
R	E	W	O	L	F	Y	U	S	T	I	G
J	P	S	P	F	A	N	B	Y	T	O	N
E	O	N	U	L	R	A	S	K	P	E	I
S	H	W	P	I	A	E	F	I	L	O	R
H	O	O	S	U	P	R	H	O	U	E	P
S	U	E	G	S	J	E	S	U	S	P	S

J	J	S	E	P	S	R	U	A	S	Y	H	H	A	M	S	T	R	I	I	B	S	L	E
O	N	N	F	M	R	C	O	W	M	Y	T	I	H	V	E	R	D	H	E	A	A	M	D

Cross out every other letter, beginning with the first letter, to find the Easter Message .



Answers: azalea, lily, marigold, petunia, pansy, daffodil, dandelion, dogwood, wisteria, tulip

Red refrigerators

by Rev. Earl Wright

It all began with just talking about our need for a new refrigerator. The old one in the apartment upstairs ("the penthouse") was giving us trouble. It frosted up much too quickly and the freezer compartment hung down in the back.

After discussing the options, we decided to move the one from downstairs to the apartment upstairs and to buy a larger one for downstairs, where the cooking is done for the common dinner each day. A larger refrigerator would come in handy for storing more food.

Later, Martha and I went to a shopping complex in downtown Chennai to buy medicines and food. Seeing an appliance store, Martha said she wanted to look for a washing machine. We inspected the washing machines, noting prices; but the length of their washing cycles was too long. So, we went over to look at refrigerators. We found a model that was suitable for the needs of our bungalow, but decided not to buy it. We've learned that it's always better to check with our consulting engineer about buying such items because he has connections that often allow us to get what we need at a better price.

After discussing it with Arulanandam, the engineer, we three resident missionaries went to an appliance store where he had a contact. We looked at several models, but decided on the same model we'd seen earlier at the shopping complex. The floor model was a blue one, and that seemed a bit too strange for our taste. The salesman assured us that he could get the same model in off white. We scheduled delivery for Monday and gave him a down payment, promising the balance at the time of delivery.

Monday arrived and the appliance salesman telephoned to say the model we wanted was not currently available in white. He offered to bring us a red one. We told him we definitely didn't want red! He promised to get a white one for us in a few days. The days passed and the salesman called again. He couldn't get a white one, but offered again to deliver a red one. We said, "No thanks."

Ernie Schache and I visited another appliance store. They had the refrigerator model that we wanted, and the salesman assured us that he'd seen a white one in their warehouse. We asked him to deliver it C.O.D. They next day the salesman called to explain he was having trouble finding a white refrigerator; only red ones were currently available from the supplier. However, he thought he might be able to get a white one from one of their other stores, if we didn't mind waiting a day or two. We happily agreed to that.

Two days later, the salesman informed us that no white refrigerators were available, but the people at that store assured us they could get the color we wanted in a couple more days.

While all of this was going on, the Whirlpool people telephoned several times wanting to know when they could come out and demonstrate the features of our new refrigerator. We kept telling them we didn't have one yet.

Immanuel, who works in our office, was aware of our frustrated attempts to find a new refrigerator and he went to another appliance store. There he found an earlier model of the same brand we wanted – and it was white! Not only that; it was actually a more deluxe model and cost less than the original model we'd ordered.

Immanuel made arrangements for us to get our new Whirlpool refrigerator, deluxe model. We were told it would be delivered the next day at a lower price. We thanked Immanuel for his efforts and said our goodbyes.

A half hour later the doorbell rang. Two young men had arrived with a refrigerator. It was the model we wanted and it had come from the second store we'd visited. The only problem was that we had no knowledge of this delivery and arrangements had already been made to get a different one; so, unfortunately, we had to send it back.

Life, at times, has its difficult moments and its amusing moments as well. Living in India, we are never quite sure what the next moment will bring. But we're sure of this: the One who holds our moments can be trusted to supply what we need.

We never saw the refrigerator they brought that night. Martha asked me about it and she wondered if it might have been a red one after all!✞.


alore!
Our missionaries in India are never quite sure what the next moment will bring. But they've learned to trust God to supply what they need.

THE ROAD TO REDEMPTION

Randee Davis, WH&FMS president

Recently a friend of mine shared an article with me that was written by George Winslow, the President of Ruritan Clubs of America. I want to share some ideas from that article with you since Ruritan seems to be facing some of the same challenges we in WHFMS are facing.

He writes about how 30 years ago, General Motors Corporation was one of the greatest worldwide success stories. Ten years later, it wasn't. And it took another ten years before GM made the decision to stop looking back at what was the best of times, but to look ahead and follow the road to greater success. They called it the Road to Redemption. They soon realized that in order to turn the corner to go down this Road to Redemption that change would have to occur. They would have to break out of their own self-built "gridlock". It was not going to be easy because change is almost always a painful process, a process that most of us resist. GM's wakeup call was a call to a "gospel of quality". For ten very productive but painful years, GM's Road to Redemption grew throughout the organization. The journey began with turning that one major corner, the turnaround decision, then continuing onward along the Road to Redemption.

Just as GM first recognized the need, then actively chose the Road to Redemption, so must WHFMS. As was true for GM, the hardest part of the journey will be breaking out of our own self-built "grid-lock" throughout the entire WHFMS organization from Local, Conference, and Regional levels all the way to the National Board. We must face the fact that unless we choose to turn the corner and look forward that our organization will cease to be. We cannot afford the luxury of holding onto and glorifying our past successes. This process will not be easy or painless but it can become our greatest success story ever.

Let us all pray together, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," as we begin this process together. Your National Board wants to provide the "right leadership" to lead us down this road. We are looking for ways to re-vitalize our organization as we look forward to the future. We have already begun the journey. Whether we continue around the corner on the Road to Redemption will depend on the good work and cooperation of all WHFMS members. Will you be a stepping-stone for change or a stumbling block of resistance? The WHFMS Road to Redemption depends on your answer.

In 1976, WHFMS was dissolved as a corporation and through restructuring became an organization part of and subject to the jurisdiction of the Advent Christian General Conference of America, Inc. At that time 3,300 Advent Christian women were active in over 215 locals. Today that membership has dropped to 1,365 members in 103 locals. If this decline continues WHFMS will cease to be within the next 25 years. The future direction of WHFMS will be addressed at our 2005 Triennial Convention at Founder's Inn in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

I heard a group called the Martins sing a song the other day that reminded me of the decisions we are facing and how God is already "Wherever You Are".

Are you standing at a crossroad wondering which road you should take
And you're dreading the decision and a possible mistake
But the will of God won't lead you where the grace of God can't keep you
You will never be out of His care, remember that the Lord's already there

You are waiting to hear thunder and see lightening in the sky
Oh, but God can work His wonders through a still small voice inside
Just keep listening and learning and continue on your journey
Following the One who is the way, He's the only road you need to take

Wherever you are, wherever you're going, God is right there beside you
Seeing and knowing, wherever you go He already knows
What lies ahead and what's behind
You'll always find He's never too far from wherever you are

We all know that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is our redemption, the only road we need to take. He commissioned all of us that believe in Him to go and tell the world about this redemption. What can we do as an organization to enable Advent Christian women to help fulfill this Great Commission? We want to hear from you, the women of the Advent Christian Denomination. Please write to me and let me know your thoughts and opinions on what we can do to revitalize the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society. Do we need a new name, a new logo, a new image or something else? Send your letters to: Randee Davis, 2201 Old Farm Road, Hudson, N.C. 28645. We know that we can't become what we need to be by remaining what we are. Let's all join together as we journey down our own Road to Redemption.✝

Coming soon: Hymns of Heritage and Hope, 2nd edition.



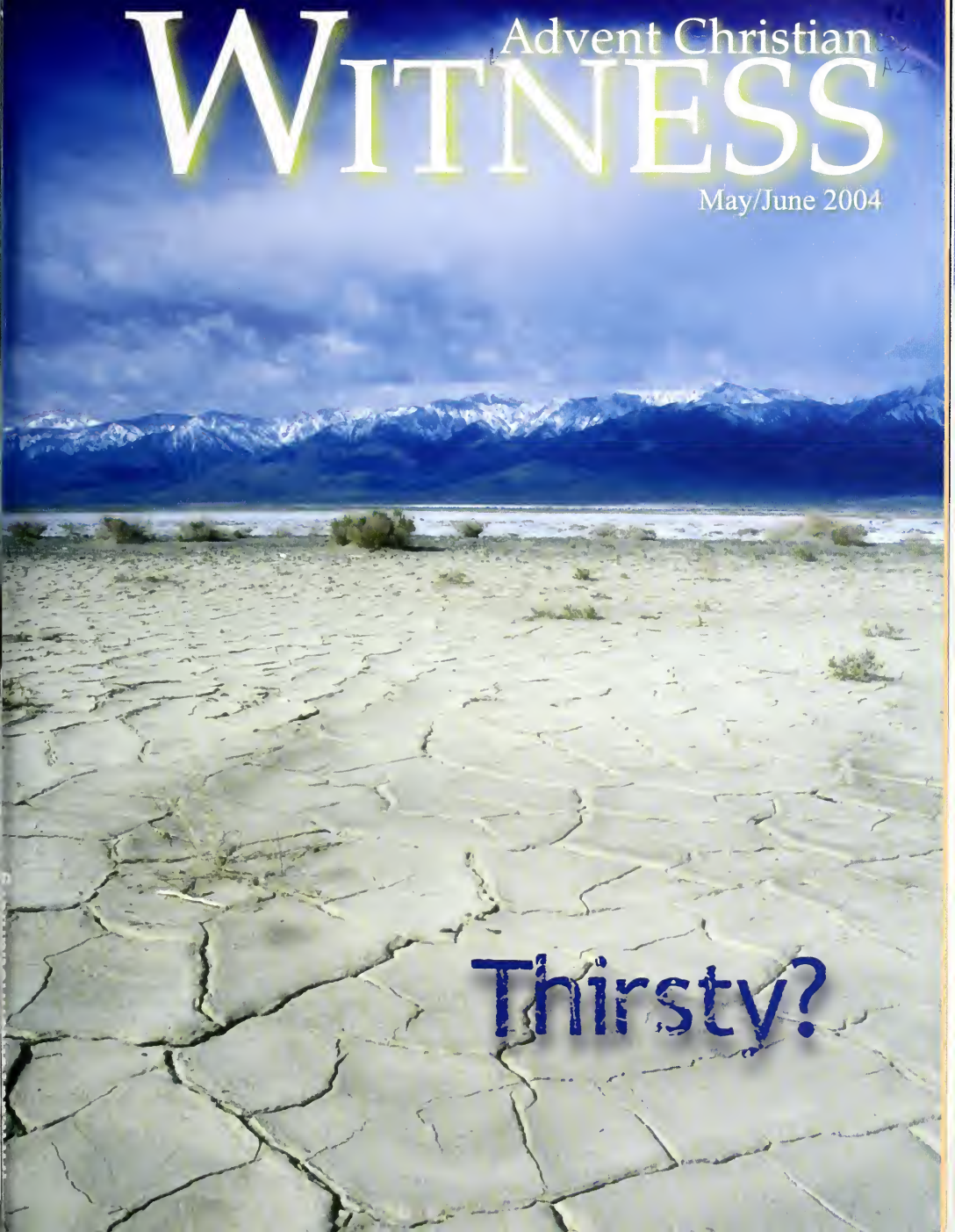
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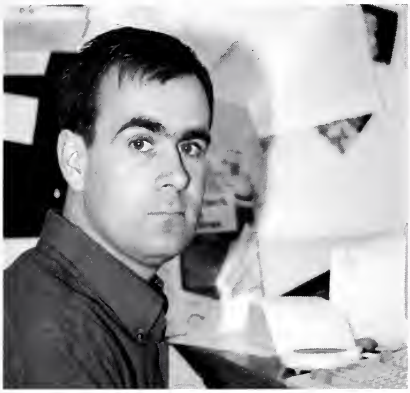
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From the Editor



The Neglected Art of Hospitality

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality..." (Hebrews 13:1-2 ESV)

When it comes to hospitality, my Mom is an undisputed champion. I can't recall a Sunday or holiday when she and Dad didn't invite company to our house. My memories of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners feature the faces of friends and strangers gathered to eat around our ping-pong table, with the overflow seated in nearby couches and loveseats. If you were coming for Thanksgiving, Mom would inquire about your favorite pie and prepare it for dessert. Our unheated porch was quite chilly during November in Maine, so it became our walk-in cooler, holding a great variety of pies.

After college, my wife and I spent fifteen years in the pastorate. Despite the typical ups and downs of ministry, we found our congregations to be supportive and loving for the most part. However, we weren't prepared for one particular disappointment in church life: a lack of hospitality. There were happy exceptions in each congregation; but generally we were not invited into our member's homes.

We had both grown up in rural churches that thrived on hospitality. In the church of my youth there was a weekly competition to see who could have the pastors over for Sunday dinner. And hospitality wasn't limited to pastors or to Sunday afternoons. Many college students and servicemen found themselves adopted by church families who provided them with better nourishment than any restaurant could offer.

I once assumed that all churches practiced the kind of hospitality I'd seen growing up at State Road Advent Christian Church. I was wrong. Since the time my family first attended our present church until now (when some might call us longtime members), we've only been invited to two families' homes.

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Desperate thirst

Rev. Clayton Blackstone



We hold these truths to be self-evident," the framers of the Declaration of Independence wrote. "All men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among them are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Since the dawn of time, that pursuit of happiness has driven much of what humans do. We change jobs, take expensive vacations, and indulge in extreme adventure sports. We seek experiences. Ecstasy. Anything to fill the insatiable thirst of our spirits. We crave something to put a smile on our faces, a song on our lips and a skip in our steps. And we want it so badly we can taste it.

Once upon a time, in a land far away, another pursued happiness with a similar intensity, with resources we can only imagine at his disposal. He devoted himself to study. He read the best authors. Sat at the feet of the wisest teachers. Set out to see firsthand everything people had accomplished. And when he had read it all, seen it all, done it all, he concluded that he had wasted his energy "chasing the wind."

He turned his attention to pleasure. He savored the best wines. Employed a houseful of servants to attend to every whim. Parlayed a bank account of millions into a portfolio worth billions. Spent every evening with a different beautiful lady in his bed. He "denied himself nothing his heart desired." But in the end, the hole remained. He "gained nothing."

(Continued on page 13)







CAMP MARANATHA
IDYLLWILD, CALIFORNIA
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF MINISTRY

MOUNTAIN TOP *Experience*



Compiled and Edited by
JODY BEGGS REEVES

As Camp Maranatha celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, Jody Beggs Reeves (now Evans) was asked to compile and edit memories and stories from a variety of people whose lives have been changed by their time at the camp. The following are excerpts from the book she published.

The Advent Christian Conference of Southern California had been holding camp meetings at Camp Carlsbad in Carlsbad, California, beginning in the early 1920s. The beach property ran alongside the railroad track and the highway. The only permanent building was a kitchen/dining room.

Ed Jaffarian, a building contractor from New England, had moved his family and his business to Pasadena at the end of World War II. As a member of the Pasadena church, he wanted to improve the camp and offered to either build an auditorium on the grounds at Carlsbad or help the conference find another campground. Soon Ed began taking a group of conference representatives to various locations under consideration. One of these was four to five miles off the Ortega highway and so primitive it didn't even have water. Another was between the Cajon Pass and Big Bear Lake. It had been a monastery and had some basic facilities. They also looked at a piece of land in Garner Valley (between Anza and Idyllwild).

It was after looking at the Garner Valley site that the men noticed the sign to Idyllwild and decided to follow Highway 243 to the small mountain village. Entering Idyllwild, they stopped at a real estate office and met Jerry Johnson. When asked if there might be some property in Idyllwild suitable for a campground, he took them to a tract of land, which had been used for a sawmill. There were five buildings on the property: a large two-story building (the original Big Pine Lodge), an office building (now remodeled as the Snack Bar and Ice Cream Parlor), a three bedroom home (used as a residence for the first manager, it is now called the Staff Lodge), a smaller one-room building with a fireplace (the original Ponderosa), and a mill shed.

"There's an $11,000 mortgage on the property and the owner needs an additional $7,500 to start a business. I think he would take $18,500 for this," said Jerry indicating the surrounding 20 acres.

"Let's see if he will consider selling for $17,000," said Ed, writing a personal check in that amount. "We would like a written response in the next few days."

A few days later, Ed informed Frank Scott, Conference President and Pastor of the Tustin church, that the conference now owned a beautiful piece of land in the San Jacinto Mountains—though he never would say if the original offer was accepted or if he had to pay more.

Jerry Johnson also handled an adjoining tract of about 3.5 acres, which includes the ball field. At a later date, he offered it to the conference for $3,000 saying he had turned down $5,000 for it as he disapproved

of the way it would be used. The conference officials thought it would be a nice addition and bought it even though they were a little skeptical about the $5,000 offer.

Years later, when Errol Hunt was talking to the local dairyman, the man commented that he offered Jerry Johnson $5,000 for that tract of land so he could expand his dairy and that Jerry refused to sell to him. We used to think the stables and their rodeos were inconvenient neighbors when they occupied the area where the lumberyard and county road department are now located. How would you like to have a dairy covering the ball field, half the dining hall and half the area for the cabins of Building #1? Let's hear it for honest realtors!

Not everyone was pleased with leaving the beach in Carlsbad. A few still say it was a mistake and those who were there cherish fond memories of those camp meetings at the beach. One notable opponent to the camp in Idyllwild was Pastor Osborne of the Los Angeles church. He referred to it sarcastically as "the Camp in the Sky." It must be said, however, that once he had a chance to visit the site, he changed his tune and became a great supporter.

The first camp meeting was held at Camp Maranatha in 1951. Most of the people stayed in tents. The Tabernacle (tent) from Carlsbad was used as a meeting place. The dining hall was under construction. One end of it was used for eating while the other was being roofed. When the roofing of that end was finished, it was used for eating while the other end was being completed.

Errol and Juanita moved to Camp Maranatha in 1951. Errol was chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Tustin church during the building of the present parsonage. That had provided him with experience in securing surplus government property, which he put to good use in obtaining much of the original equipment and building materials for the camp. He seemed to be the man for the hour to get the camp ready for use and was selected by the conference as camp manager.





No one in our group could recall who the speakers were for the camps in 1951 and 1952. Rick Drew, the new pastor of the San Diego church, was the speaker for 1953. Carl Fromhold was the song leader. Meetings were still being held in the big tent from Carlsbad.

The camp manager reported directly to the Conference Board of Trustees until the conference decided to appoint a Camp Management Committee with its own treasurer as a more efficient way to manage the construction and operations of the camp.

To the best of our collective memory, we know Leroy Connelly was on this original committee and served as long as he lived. Others who were probably on the committee include Sim Draper, Al Schmekel, Chuck Anderson, and Adlai Bowden.

Volunteers did almost all the original construction and preparation of the grounds. Roy and Estelle Peterson, of Los Angeles church, did much of the work on the cement block buildings. They had many helpers whose names we wish we could record. We do remember that Roy built the circle around the flagpole. Some members of the Anderson family of San Diego built the fireplaces in the Dining Hall and Ponderosa.✞

Prepared from tapes of a conversation between Errol and Juanita Hunt, John Palmer, and Walter Shirley that took place about 1990. Errol and Juanita were the managers of the camp from the time it started in 1951 until 1971.

1 Corinthian's 13 Camp Maranatha's summer staff style



If we could creosote all the railings around the camp in an hour, but didn't care about each other, our speed would mean nothing.
If we could cut croutons, make granola, and slice tomatoes with a wave of our hand and weren't polite and kind to the little kids, our magic would be worthless. And if we could dig ditches, sweep the volleyball court, and split firewood without getting tired, but didn't have a loving, serving attitude, our strength and endurance would be of no value at all.

Love is patient when the campers are late for their first meal because the bus broke down.
Love is kind when a camper needs special food because of allergies.
Love is grateful when we are invited to various homes for a progressive dinner.
Love is not irritable when we have to work extra hard before the health inspector comes.
Love is not jealous when the boys get to make dump runs and the girls have to clean bathrooms.
Love is appreciative when we get a weekend off to go to the beach.
Love is compassionate when a cut finger means a trip to the local paramedics.
Love is understanding when college-student staff members need to leave before summer is over.
Carrot sticks, fruit trays, and punch on the tables will come to an end, but love is eternal.
General clean-up, working in the snack bar, and covering the pool will come to an end, but love never will. Daily devotions, weekly staff meetings, and raiding the walk-in will come to an end, but love is forever. Every year summer comes to an end, but love is everlasting.

Before we came to work at Camp Maranatha we weren't sure what to expect. But we have learned that a servant's heart and a thankful attitude are values we can take with us the rest of our lives.

These three things we will continue to learn: service, patience and love.
But the greatest of these is love.

Bibles, toilets, lizards and the joy of service

by John Tate



The gentle whirring of the golf cart and wind blowing through my hair inspired me with a sense of freedom as I steered my way to the North End. A fistful of staff keys made me flush with feelings of responsibility and authority. And the stiffening smell of the Pine-O-Lav I was about to splash around the upper end bathrooms kept me grounded firmly in reality.

As I pulled up to the bathhouse and parked my sled (that green three-wheeler monster was one sweet ride), I was undaunted by the prospect of muddy floors, unflushed toilets, and dirty sinks that were holding onto hair as if it were dear life itself. It was a sunny, breezy Thursday morning, and I couldn't think of anywhere I'd rather be.

After making a trip to the storage room, which, of course, was only accessible to those at the highest level of authority, I headed for the girls' bathroom. I gave two firm blows to the door and then, with all the manliness I could summon, bellowed, "Staff! Anybody in there? I'm here to clean your toilets!"

The work went quickly and soon I found myself starting in on the boys' side. Why was I so happy? This wasn't exactly the stuff of dreams, and yet I was more contented than I imagine any prince or player could be. As I began mopping the shower stalls while contemplating this mystery, in ran a little junior camper with a Bible in one hand and a lizard in the other. "Could you hold these for a minute? I've got to go pretty bad. Thanks, I'm late for Bible class."

As I stood holding the squirmy reptile in one hand and the Good Book in the other, it became clear to me why this caged bird was singing. I was in service, full service, to my King on His campground where He was doing His Kingdom work in the lives of so many. What a wonderful feeling of fulfilled purpose entered my soul! There was nowhere else I'd rather be.

I headed back to the kitchen with my heart full of joy, my nostrils enjoying the sweet smell of pine, and my head filled with thoughts of volleyball.✞

Camp Maranatha's plans for future ministry

Camp Maranatha is involved in a modernization program. The following are some of the recent developments in which you might be interested.



The Big Pine Lodge

In June 2000 the new Big Pine Lodge was completed with over 3000 square feet of floor space. It has eight sleeping rooms with bathroom/shower facilities in each room. Each room can accommodate up to 5 persons. The Big Pine Lodge also has a spacious lounge, which can be used as a meeting place for as many as 50 persons.

The North Lodge is currently under construction and about two-thirds completed. When completed, in about another year, it will have over 7000 square feet of floor space and contain 16 sleeping rooms with bathroom/shower facilities in each room. Each room will accommodate as many as 5 persons. It will also have two meeting or general purpose rooms.

Other improvements that have been completed include, but are not limited to:
1. Public restrooms renovated.
2. Remodeled one of the cabins into two dormitory style rooms, which sleep 10 per room, and have attached bathroom and showers. (The cabin, which is centrally located, had been formerly divided into five rooms and did not have attached bathroom/shower facilities.)
3. Installed new beds in the staff lodge. (The staff lodge is so named because in the summer we used to house our summer staff in this building. During the fall, winter and spring the staff lodge is used to house guest groups.)

Other planned improvements within the next few years include:
1. Expand and improve upon the dining hall and kitchen.
2. Construct a new general purpose, all weather building, which will accommodate a worship meeting of up to 300 people or basketball/volleyball games.
3. Relocate the office into a remodeled cabin located near the camp's main parking lot.



Keith Shirley and Josh Tate

The above work is being done primarily by volunteer workers. In addition to people from the conference churches we have made extensive use of a volunteer organization known as Mobile Missionary Assistance Program with headquarters in Southern California.

Some recent events include:
1. Keith Shirley became the camp's director in October 2003 upon the retirement of Dick Beggs.
2. Josh Tate, the son of Rev. Barry Tate and Grandson of the late Rev. Joe Tom Tate, was hired as the assistant director in May 2004.

The modernization program is designed to make the camp more usable all year. When the North Lodge is completed, the camp will have 29 rooms with bath facilities, either in the room or the same building, available for public use. This will make the camp more appealing to camps comprised of adults, seniors, and couples who typically schedule retreats/conferences during the "off season" (fall, winter & spring).✞

(Desperate continued)
He poured himself into his work until he realized that the fruit of his efforts would be left to one who would come after him. "And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?" The prospect of leaving the work of his hands to someone who had done nothing left him in despair. "Meaningless!" the Teacher cried.

"There is an emptiness at our core that is like a Black Hole," writes Diogenes Allen, "a black hole in space. A Black Hole sucks down all matter, and there is an emptiness in us that threatens to suck us down as well, although what it is actually doing is dispelling an illusion. It is not destroying us, but revealing to us that we are already a dead thing trying to give itself life by taking all within its reach. But the core of us remains an emptiness. To be a person, a soul, is to need something beyond oneself to live; whatever we can grasp cannot give us life. No matter what efforts we make to fill ourselves, we always find ourselves once again empty."

According to Jesus, it's because we look for the wrong thing in all the wrong places. He startles us with his declarations. We are on the right track—at least according to him—if we are poor in spirit, mourners and meek, qualities our world decrees as out of favor. Happiness comes, not by pursuing happiness, but on our way to something else.

"You are on the right path to happiness if you hunger and thirst after righteousness."

"You are on the right path to happiness if you hunger and thirst after righteousness."

This thing Jesus says ought to be our passion, has a smell of theological mustiness to it. But dusted off and spit shined, it's a word about relationships-- a word about being in harmony with God and others. It's a word fleshed out in the summary Jesus gave of the Ten Commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments all the law and the prophets depend." (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV)

"You are blessed when you have worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you will ever eat." (Matthew 5:6 The Message)

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure In them,'" says the King in Jerusalem who declared all else meaningless chasing after the wind. "Remember him before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the



windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him —before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7)

"Only one food satisfies," testifies one who chowed down on the best life had to offer, "the rest is nothing but junk food." Hungering and thirsting for God isn't so much something we work ourselves into as much as it is something we admit to. And it's not something we are likely to admit to apart from a bit of fasting from the spiritual chips and salsa, the religious candy and the self-help microwave dinners that comprise our usual diet.

The remarkable thing about our Black Hole hunger lies in the incredible lengths God has gone to provide us with food and drink guaranteed to satisfy.

Susanna knew she would die, but she wanted her daughter to live.

"Mommy I'm so thirsty. I want a drink."

Susanna Petroysan listened helplessly to her daughter's pleas. Tons of collapsed concrete and steel trapped she and four-year-old Gayaney. Karine, Susanna's sister-in-law, lay beside them, one of fifty-five thousand victims in the worst earthquake in Soviet Armenia's history.

December 7, 1988. 11:30A.M. Susanna had gone to Karine's house to try on a dress. The quake struck at 11:41. She had just removed the dress and was wearing only stockings and a slip, when the fifth-floor apartment began to shake. The mother grabbed her daughter and took a couple of steps. The floor opened. They fell into the basement with the nine-story apartment collapsing around them.

"Mommy I need a drink. Please give me something!"

There was nothing for Susanna to give.

She was trapped flat on her back. A concrete panel eighteen inches above her head and a crumpled water pipe above her shoulders kept her from standing. Feeling around in the darkness, she found a twenty-four ounce jar of blackberry jam that had fallen into the basement. She gave the entire jar to her daughter to eat. It was gone by the second day.



"Mommy, I'm so thirsty."

Susanna knew she would die, but she wanted her daughter to live. She found a dress, perhaps the one she had come to try on, and made a bed for Gayaney. Though it was bitter cold, she took off her stockings and wrapped them around the child to keep her warm.

The two were trapped for eight days.

Because of the darkness, Susanna lost track of time. Because of the cold, she lost the feeling in her fingers and toes. Because of her inability to move, she lost hope. "I was just waiting for death."

She began to hallucinate. Her thoughts wandered. A merciful sleep occasionally freed her from the horror of her entombment, but the sleep would be brief. Something always awakened her: the cold, the hunger, or-- most often-- the voice of her daughter.

"Mommy, I'm thirsty!"

Her groping fingers, numb from cold, found a piece of shattered glass. She sliced open her left index finger and gave it to her daughter to suck.

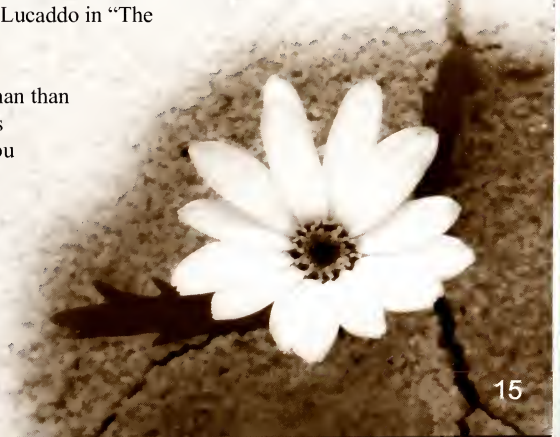
At some point in that eternal night, Susanna had an idea. She remembered a television program about an explorer in the Arctic who was dying of thirst. His comrade slashed open his hand and gave his friend his blood.

"I had no water, no fruit juice, no liquids. It was then I remembered I had my own blood."

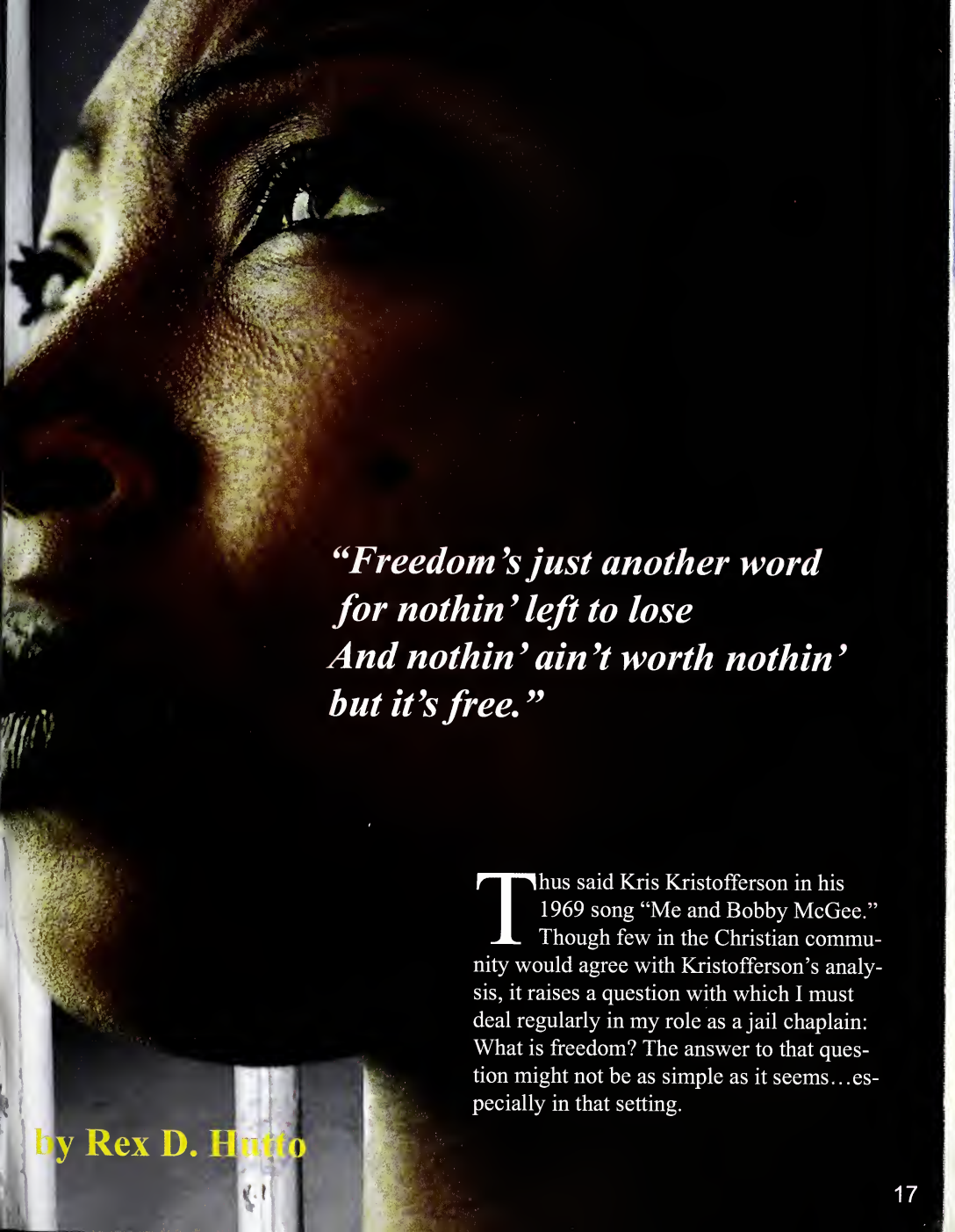
Her groping fingers, numb from cold, found a piece of shattered glass. She sliced open her left index finger and gave it to her daughter to suck.

The drops of blood weren't enough. "Please, Mommy, some more. Cut another finger." Susanna has no idea how many times she cut herself. She only knows that if she hadn't, Gayaney would have died. Her blood was her daughter's only hope. (As told by Max Lucaddo in "The Applause of Heaven.")

Jesus once said: "Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends. And I call you my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:13-14). He died to prove it—died so that our Black Hole could be filled with the infinite object, Himself.✞




Free
Indeed!



"Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose And nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free."

Thus said Kris Kristofferson in his 1969 song "Me and Bobby McGee." Though few in the Christian community would agree with Kristofferson's analysis, it raises a question with which I must deal regularly in my role as a jail chaplain: What is freedom? The answer to that question might not be as simple as it seems…especially in that setting.

by Rex D. Hutto

It was my fourth sermon of the day: one at my church in the morning and two already at the jail in the afternoon. I had at least one more service after this one, possibly more, and I was already tired.

My mouth was on autopilot as I spoke the familiar preacher words, "If you have your Bible with you, I invite you to turn with me to…" Then I found myself adding a comment that I didn't make in any of the other services: "This is God's truth. Jesus said, 'You will know the truth and the truth will…'"

A number of the inmates had a church background, so several finished the sentence: "…set you free." A couple even added a heart-felt, "Amen."

What if the truth will get you twenty years?

The young man didn't just speak up; he politely raised his hand and waited for me to call on him. After I recognized him, he wasn't challenging or argumentative, but seemed to be genuinely wrestling with the issue as he asked, "What if the truth will get you twenty years?"

Honestly, I was a bit annoyed by his question. I had my prepared remarks and really didn't feel like an impromptu dialog. "So you think the truth could get you twenty years?" I asked.

"Yup," he said matter-of-factly.

It occurred to me that a portion of my sermon would address that issue to a certain degree, so I said, "Hold on to that question, OK? We'll get to that in a bit." Then I prepared to read the text for the sermon. It was at that point that the gentle Spirit of God made it clear, "No, we won't 'get to it in a bit.' We'll get to it right now."

"But, Lord, what do I say?" I prayed silently. "What does this white boy from the suburbs really know about the prospect of spending the next two decades locked in a cage?" It is in just such situations that we are ripe to experience that phenomenon described by the apostle Paul: "not.. wise and persuasive words, but… a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4).

"Actually, let's not wait. Let's talk about this now," I said, sensing I was entering into the realm of words not fully my own.

"What is freedom?" I asked. His facial expression indicated that the answer was so obvious my question didn't deserve an answer.

"Is freedom the ability to *do* what you want to *do*?" I continued. "Or is freedom the ability to *be* the kind of person you want to *be*?"

He looked thoughtful, then slowly answered, "I guess… I guess it's being the kind of person you want to be."

"Well, then," I said, "That doesn't have much to do with where you lay your head at night. I've met a lot of people *in here* who are a lot more free—as you define freedom—then a lot of people *out there*. You see, that's the way that the truth sets you free. I've found in my own experience that being the kind of person I want to be often sets limits on my ability to do what I want to do. Only you can decide which type of freedom is most important to you." He continued to look as if he was deep in thought.

I don't know what happened to that young man…which type of freedom he chose to pursue or where he will pursue it for the next twenty years. But I thought often of our brief Spirit-led conversation as I spoke with Angie*.



When I got the message from the jail commander that Angie wanted to talk with me again, I thought, "Wasn't once enough? Lord, do I really have to subject myself to this again?"



Angie did not match the average demographic of our correctional facility. The African-American woman in her late 30s was college-educated and articulate, soft-spoken and thoughtful. She was also a career criminal. After meeting with her the first time, I told my wife, "She is the most kind, pleasant, well-spoken, likable scammer I've ever been scammed by!"

Angie's crime of choice was bad checks, using many aliases, fake IDs sophisticated techniques of check forging. Because of her long history of bad checks, Angie was forbidden by law to have a checking ac-

*Not her real name

count of her own, so her boyfriend was the authorized check signer on the account for Angie's small business. He typically signed a number of checks in advance, then Angie would complete and mail them.

Angie's latest arrest was for allegedly writing a check on her business account to another woman who looked somewhat like her, opening a bank account in that woman's name with a lost or stolen ID, then significantly overdrawing the new account. The woman in whose name the account was opened was, of course, nowhere to be found. Detectives, however, recognized Angie on the surveillance video from the bank.

She couldn't possibly have been the one to open that account, Angie insisted during our first meeting. She was attending a trade show in another city, she said, protesting her innocence emphatically. She was lying and I knew it.

So, when I was told that Angie wanted to see me again, I put off visiting her at the jail. "What's the point?" I asked myself. "She's just going to try to scam me some more. So many of the inmates think a good word from the chaplain might get them a lighter sentence. Nothing could be further from the truth."

She is the m@st kind, pleasant, well-sp@ken, likable scammer Ive ever been scammed by!

One day, after I had put off seeing Angie for several weeks, I sensed that I *should* see her. That day. The Angie who walked into the conference room in which I meet with inmates was not the same Angie with whom I had met previously. Gone were the self-confident smile and the soft-spoken but firm insistence of her innocence. Her hair was disheveled, her face drawn, her eyes red and swollen.

Angie was a pastor's daughter, but a rocky relationship with her father during her childhood and youth (largely the father's fault) had contributed to her lack of a genuine walk with God. She "believed," but in a way that had no practical impact on her life.

But the God whom she had been avoiding for so many years had cornered her the previous evening. We often joke about inmates being "a captive audience," but never has that been more true than when God began to "perform" his work in Angie's life the night before.

In short, God held a mirror up to Angie and forced her to take an objective look at herself. She was appalled at what she saw!



The lying that had become a way of life to her was suddenly loathsome. Her self-centered existence seemed so empty and pointless. Rather than seeing herself as she had always wanted to see herself, she now saw herself as she was, and she was terrified. Angie asked to be put in a padded cell because she feared that she might actually take her own life, so deep was her despair.

After Angie told me her story, we discussed Psalm 52:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." If I had ever seen true brokenness before God, this was it. She was now at the point where the Master Potter could begin remaking her (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

She did open the bogus bank account, Angie told me, practicing the concept of truth-telling that was so new to her. It was awkward… the truth felt funny in her mouth!

.....She now saw herself as she was and she was terrified.

Angie dove head-first into God's Word, now beginning to *understand* some of what she *knew* from childhood. And, just as important, she began to *apply* it to her life. At the top of a legal pad where she took notes on her Bible study, she wrote in large letters the word INTEGRITY. She had a new goal in life, but it wouldn't be easy to achieve. "Most of today I just sat on my bunk with my teeth clenched, trying not to tell a lie," she told me with frustration. "How *long* is it going to take? How long before I get beyond this?"

Looking at my calendar, I said with a grin, "Well, let's see…it's been—what?—nine days now? I don't know, Angie. Sometimes it can take upwards of three weeks!" She grinned sheepishly, beginning to understand the *process* of growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

relationship. She is beginning to sense a call to some area of ministry…perhaps jail and prison ministry…and is considering going to Bible college. But that won't happen for a while. She still has more time to serve.

A plea agreement has been reached with the prosecutor's office. After ousting a 16-year incumbent whom many considered too soft on crime, our new county prosecutor has spent eighteen months delivering on his promise to "get tough on crime." Especially repeat offenders like Angie.

Angie faced several felony charges on the offense for which she was arrested, including forgery and defrauding a financial institution. She also faced serving the remaining seven years of the probation she violated by committing this crime. The prosecutor's office was also considering filing a number of old charges that had been shelved during her last trial. In addition, the prosecutor was considering charging her with being a persistent felon, an Indiana statute that can add ten or more years to repeat offenders' sentences. Her potential sentence: up to 45 years in prison.

While waiting to go to trial, another charge was filed against Angie for a bounced check at a local discount store. "Don't worry about it," her attorney told her. "I don't think they have enough evidence to get a conviction."

"Oh, but I did it," she said. "That was one of my aliases." Then she started writing, finally saying, "Please give the prosecutor this list of my other aliases. This will probably clear up quite a few cases for him." Her dumbfounded attorney reluctantly did as she requested and her list did, in fact, close a number of cases.



Angie continues to study God's Word and pray, seeking to sink her roots down deep in Christ and develop the inner character that will not only make this her last incarceration, but that will honor God and bless others. She has reconciled with her father, who has admitted and apologized for his role in their difficult

Angie's initial shock turned to elation when her attorney later told her of the plea agreement the prosecutor had offered—by far the most lenient I have heard come out of his office in the last year-and-a-half. She was to plead guilty to forgery for the bogus bank account and the prosecutor would in turn drop the new bounced check charge if she would pay restitution. He

would not file the old charges that were pending. He would not revoke her probation. He would not charge her with being a persistent felon.



The forgery charge carries a sentence of eight years, four of which would be suspended without probation, leaving four years to serve. In Indiana, every day served with good behavior is worth two days toward a sentence, so Angie's four years really amounts to two. She has been in jail a year awaiting trial. Doubling that for good behavior, she will only have to serve one more year out of a potential 45!

But one aspect of this offer, as generous as it was, troubled Angie, presenting her with an ethical dilemma. It was a great deal, better than she could have ever dreamed, but could she accept it? Could she sign the plea agreement?

Walking into court to enter her plea, she told her lawyer, "I'm not sure I can do this. I'm not sure I can plead guilty to forgery." The attorney nearly exploded. She was *not* going to get a better deal than this, he insisted.

No, she explained, that wasn't the issue. She was more than happy with the proposed sentence. It was the charge that bothered her. As was their practice, Angie's boyfriend had signed the blank check she had used to open the account. It was *his* legitimate, authorized signature on the check. The plea agreement required her to plead guilty to the one crime of which she was innocent!

"I can't do this," she said. "It's not the truth." Her exasperated lawyer mumbled that he would see what he could do.

At that point the prosecutor walked into the courtroom with a file folder containing the paperwork for the plea agreement. Angie opened the folder and reluctantly read the final copy of the agreement. It had been amended such that she would plead guilty to defrauding a financial institution, with the same sentence originally agreed upon.

"Oh, I can sign that!" she said. "That's the truth!"

Freedom is not that ability to do what you want to do. Freedom is the ability to be the kind of person you want to be. It will be another year before Angie can do what she wants to do, but as she sits in her jail cell, she knows what it means to be *free* in Christ!✠

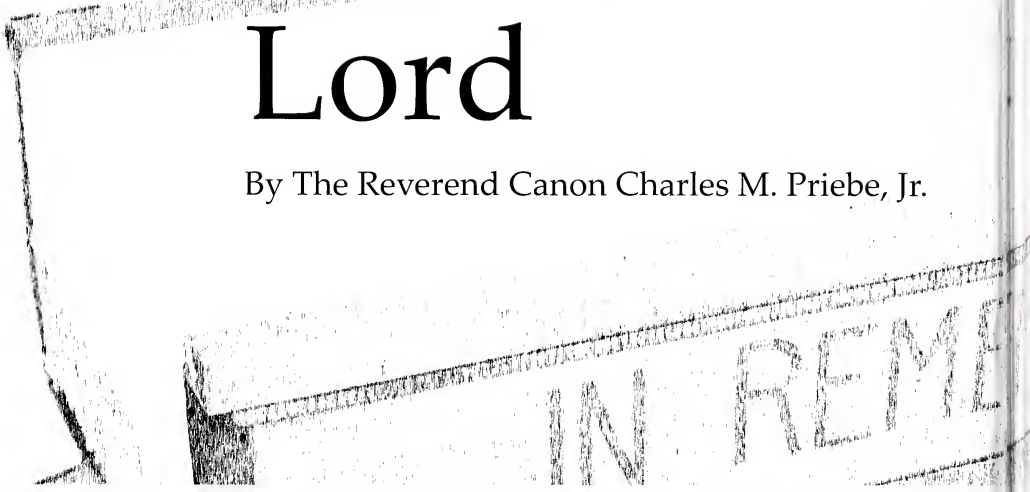
"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:32, 36).

Rev. Rex Hutto is pastor of the New Albany (Indiana) Advent Christian Church.

She asked to be put in a padded cell because she feared that she might actually take her own life, so deep was her despair.

Be present at
Lord

By The Reverend Canon Charles M. Priebe, Jr.



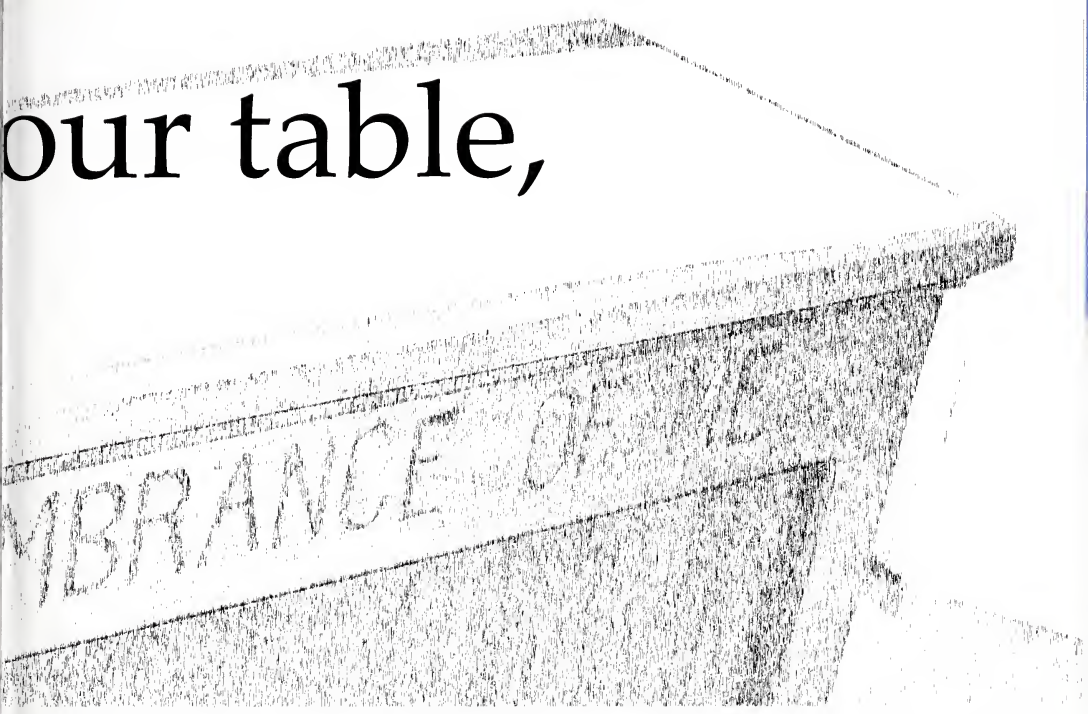
I had been retired only thirteen months; but already it had seemed like thirteen years. I had thought that, most of all, I would miss the preaching and the visitations in hospitals and homes; but not so!

No! Not so! It was the absence of the Communion Table of the Church that is the biggest void in my life. It is the inability to be at the center of the Table celebrating the Holy Communion with a worshipping congregation that really hurts.

Even so, something wonderful has been happening in my life, something that I have not understood. Meals: breakfast, lunches, and dinners have been becoming more and more important to me. Those who know me might say, with grins, "So what else is new?" But I do not mean what they think. I am not referring to the eating of those meals; but what happens to me during those meals. More and more I am feeling the Presence of that "Unseen Guest" that the Mystics of previous generations have known better than I.

I thought at first, that this might only be loneliness revealing itself; but that is not so either. What it is was finally made clear to me when I read these words from one of William Barclay's books:

our table,



"The Lord's Supper was a real meal...This was no eating of a cube of bread and the drinking of a sip of wine. It was a meal for hungry men. We might well say that what Jesus was teaching....is not only to assemble in church and eat a ritual and symbolic feast:he is telling them that every time they sit down and eat a meal, that meal is in memory of him. Jesus is not only Lord of the Communion Table; He must be Lord of the dinner table, too!"

Holy Communion has always been more than a ritual, a symbol, or a memorial to me. I have always felt our Lord's presence. Maybe he, for some reason or other, is now sitting down with me and for longer periods of time. In this prayer I often ask him to do so.

Be present at our table, Lord. Be here and everywhere adored.
These creatures bless, and grant that we, May feast in Paradise with Thee!

I have always felt his presence at the Communion Table of each church where I have served; but now, in my retirement, I particularly feel his presence in my daily meals. Maybe this is because I have made more time to be with him! Could this be so?✞

1)The Gospel of Matthew, Vol.2, The Daily Study Bible Series Revised edition, William Barclay, p.342

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

Summer provides a wonderful occasion to get away for a vacation. Many enjoy this season as an opportunity to spend quality time together as a family. Some do so at a Christian campground, where they find spiritual renewal and physical rest.

Campmeetings have a wonderful place in the heritage of Adventism. I well remember attending one in the days of my youth. While I cannot remember a specific message of the evangelist or a particular lesson of a Bible teacher, I am keenly aware of the impact this time had on my spiritual formation as a young person.

Through the years, many have heard the call to Christian ministry at these hallowed places. God has spoken through his servants; and people have been challenged to heed the call to full-time Christian service. Among them are the young people God has raised up to serve him in their generation.

The same is happening right now across this country. God is speaking to the hearts of young men and women at youth and family camps. As I write this I have recently witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit wooing teenagers at one of our youth camps. My prayer is that some of those who hear the challenge will heed the call and pursue full-time vocational ministry. Like Jeremiah of old, who was called by the Lord to the office of prophet while still a youth (Jeremiah 1:6), we need young people who will serve the Lord as missionaries, evangelists, Christian school teachers, and Pastors.

God grant that many will hear the voice of the Lord this summer like Isaiah of old, and heed His call. "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8) ✞

Rev. Glenn Rice is pastor of Oak Hill Bible Church (AC) in Oxford, Mass. He is president of the Eastern Regional Association and was appointed interim-president of ACGC to serve the remainder of Rev. Ronald Thomas, Jr.'s term.

(editorial continued)
Could it be that I'm an especially distasteful guest: obnoxious, chewing with my mouth open, and unconsciously insulting the host's political affiliations? Is that why we're not invited over to others' homes? Whatever my social shortcomings may be, almost everyone I know has a similar experience. None of my pastor-friends are the happy targets of a State Road-style of hospitality competition. And, apart from rescue missions, I know of no one who needs a ping-pong table to seat their guests.

Things need to change. Here's a simple suggestion: ask someone from your church over for dinner. Even if you don't feel too close to the pastor, and his kids are a bit "hyper," think what a blessing it would be to his wife if you invited them. Look around your congregation and see if there isn't someone else who might be blessed by an hour's visit at your table.

Some readers may be wondering if I'm making a bid to fill Martha Stewart's recently vacated role. Why else would I push this hospitality thing so much? Because it can mean so much to people, and because the Word of God commands it:

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

From the very beginning, the church thrived on hospitality. Fellowship meals were the setting for Holy Communion, and, for decades, private homes were the only sanctuaries for worship. As examples for others, the apostle Paul required that church leaders be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2). To this day, particularly in countries where believers are persecuted, hospitality is a holy undertaking, and the church has thrived because of it.

One of the first activities our risen Lord Jesus did was share a meal with a few believers. We will never go wrong if we follow his example.✝



To encourage you in this important endeavor, I offer the following…

Hospitality Hints I Learned From My Mom:

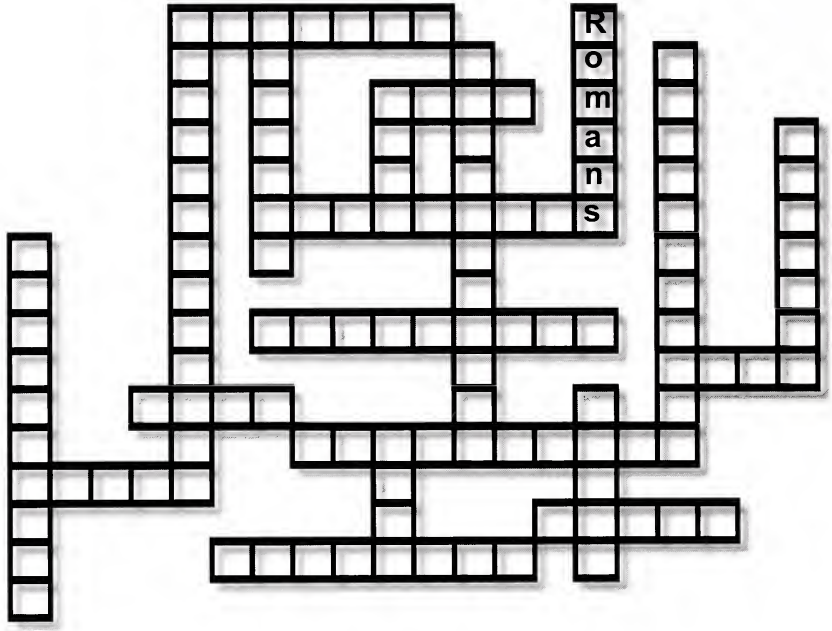
- **A clean house is nice, but not all-important.** Mom was very good about keeping the house clean; but if it wasn't spotless that didn't keep her from having company. She and Dad often invited people home for a meal right after Sunday worship. Mom never said, "We can't have anyone over; I haven't dusted!" And, no guest ever said, "I can't believe you'd ask me over for dinner with your house this dusty!"

- **The meal is the occasion but not the reason for hospitality.** People like to eat, but most are hungrier for a good visit. Mom always served the best meal she could; but she wasn't cooking for compliments. She wanted the food to be good, but the fellowship had to be better. If you don't have time to cook, or can't cook very well, order a pizza or pick up some Chinese food.

- **Don't let what you lack keep you from sharing what you have.** Kathy and I don't have room for a ping-pong table sized crowd; our whole house would almost fit in my parents' living room. But that doesn't stop us from having guests. We just keep the numbers to what we can comfortably accommodate.

- **Act the way you want your guests to act.** If you want your guests to feel comfortable and "at home," you need to relax. You'll likely be a little nervous the first time company comes for dinner; but, if you treat them like family, you'll all probably enjoy yourselves.

- **Keep the TV off.** It may seem like an obvious courtesy, to not allow a television to distract from the visiting; yet, as a pastor, I called on people who didn't turn off their TV the whole time I was there – even during prayer! There's at least one exception to this rule: when a major sporting event is broadcast, and the host and guests are all fans. Watching a game together can be a fun social event, with visiting happening at the same time. (But don't watch the half-time show, under any circumstances!)



Place these words in the puzzle above. One has been done for you.

4 letters	5 letters	6 letters	7 letters	8 letters
ACTS	JAMES	ROMANS	HEBREWS	PHILEMON
JOHN	PETER		MATTHEW	
JUDE	TITUS		TIMOTHY	
LUKE				
MARK				

9 letters	10 letters	11 letters	13 letters
EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS	CORINTHIANS	THESSALONIANS
GALATIONS	REVELATION	PHILIPPIANS	

Unscramble these Bible verses.

1. he loves obey If me, will teaching. anyone my — John 14: 23

2. is than To better obey sacrifice... — I Samuel 15:22

3. Blessed who word and rather it. are hear obey those the of God — Luke 11: 28

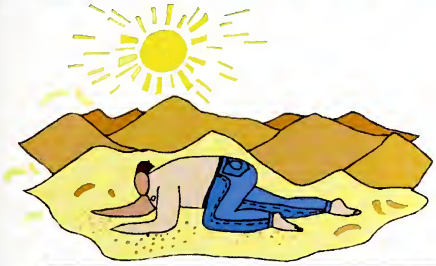
4. right. your in Children, obey Lord, this parents the for is — Ephesians 6: 1



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell



Help the thirsty soul find his way to living water

"Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him'" (John 7:37-38).



Created For Ministry



ALSO!

By Randee Davis



We believe that God created women for ministry, to use their gifts for evangelism, discipleship and to do his work on this earth. The Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society has always worked to equip, encourage and enable Advent Christian women to use their gifts and opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ faithfully, urgently and sacrificially until he comes. This is not an easy task due to barriers that women sometimes have to overcome just because they are women. God's word tells us about how these barriers were brought about by sin and how he made a way for us to overcome them and become all he created us to be.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 2:16-18 and 22, *And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

And so the story of man and woman begins. Since God did not want man to be alone he made him '*a helper*'. We also know from Genesis 1:31 that God considered this creation of woman a good thing, '*And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*'. Every thing was good! God had created man and woman and put them in a perfect environment with everything they would ever need. It was not long, however, until Satan appears in the form of a serpent to tempt the woman.

....Eve had really messed up royally--not only had she brought the wrath of God down on all women, but now everyone would have to die!



Genesis 3:2-6 tells us, *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate it."*

The Fall of mankind occurred when both Adam and Eve disobeyed. We are not told why this evil thing was allowed into the garden. We only know that God created the man and woman to love and obey him and they failed. Their relationship with the Lord was broken. Both would suffer the consequences of their sin, as would all of mankind. The woman has traditionally borne more than her share of the brunt for the consequences of sin which entered the world at the Fall.

To some degree, almost every culture in the world reflects a negative attitude towards women.

We read in Genesis 3:16, *To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*

We could say that Eve had really messed up royally--not only had she brought the wrath of God down on all women, but now everyone would have to die! This prompted a man by the name of Jesus ben Sirach to write two centuries before Christ, 'From a woman sin had its beginning and because of her we all die.'

Cultures everywhere reflect the effects of the Fall. From the beginning of time women have suffered abuse, have been used, overworked and undervalued in almost all societies. To some degree, almost every culture in the world reflects a negative attitude towards women. Because of these negative attitudes, it has been extremely hard for women to use their gifts in ministry.

Sin created a barrier between men and women, which has degraded both through the centuries. The good news is that Jesus Christ has broken down the barriers. He came that our relationship with God might be restored! Wherever Christianity has gone in this world, a woman's place has vastly improved. Jesus honored women, taught them, healed them, treated them with respect and assigned them to proclaim his message! Jesus

shed his blood on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sin. His gift of salvation is for every man, woman and child. Jesus made it possible for us to be exactly what we were created to be from the very beginning, "a helper". We are helpers!

Now women were faced with the challenge of using their gifts in ministry after centuries of being made to feel inferior and suffering abuse. Overcoming the barriers would not be easy. First she would have to realize that she is loved and cherished and precious in the eyes of the Lord. She must recognize the gifts that he has given her and know that God expects her to use the gifts. She must overcome the barriers of background, race, lack of education, social status and the challenge of being a woman in a man's world, to gain a godly sense of self-worth. Only when a woman accepts who she is in Jesus Christ can she truly minister with his authority and power.

We read in Galatians 3:26-28, *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Whatever our gifts, education, or vocation might be, our calling is to do God's work on earth. This is our ministry. What is God calling you to do as a woman? God is calling the whole church, men and women, to take the Gospel to the whole world. The gifts of the Spirit are distributed to all of God's people for this purpose. It is his plan that we work together in a spirit of cooperation to evangelize the world. We are not in a competition of men versus women. We are in a partnership working together..... *'And the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"*

What can you do to be everything God wants you to be? First, make sure your relationship with Christ, your knowledge of the word of God, and your response to the Holy Spirit has priority in your life. Be much in prayer. Discover your own spiritual gifts. Look for ways to develop them and use them to build up the Body of Christ. Know what you believe about the biblical role of women in ministry. Look for every opportunity available to minister in and through your church. Be a mentor. Show respect and appreciation for the men with whom you minister. Enjoy serving Christ with the precious gifts he has given you.✞





Ms. Randee Davis is National President of the Advent Christian Women's Home and Foreign Mission Society



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From the Editor



The Parable of the Couch

Kathy and I searched for the right piece of furniture for months. We sat on hundreds of sofas, couches and divans, looking for the perfect combination of style and comfort. Eventually, we found a couch that wasn't littered with twenty pillows, wasn't too hard, and didn't suck our posteriors to the floor like some insidious black hole in space. It cost more than most, but we knew we'd enjoy it for many years, and we took comfort in its lifetime warranty.

Less than two years after our purchase I began to have a sinking feeling, literally. Sitting in the middle of the couch provided me with a close-up view of my kneecaps. I soon discovered that a brace underneath had come loose. So I called "John," my personal furniture sales consultant who had extolled the virtues of the product at the time of purchase. The conversation went something like this:

"John, my couch has a brace that needs to be refastened."

"Well, Mr. Wheaton, we'll be glad to fix it. Just bring it right in and we'll take care of it."

"John. It's a big, big, heavy couch! Do you really expect me to bring it in?"

"Well, yes. We have a furniture repairman who works on-site."

"John, this is a really huge piece of furniture, not just some chair or coffee table."

"I understand that, Mr. Wheaton. But we can't send our repairman all over the county. That's just not practical."

(Continued on page 25)

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On the cover:
Donna Pitts, of Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church, Waterville, Maine, introduces the evening's entertainment



David Gibbs prepares some of the treats



Just Desserts?

Edited by Rev. Tom Warner

Many of our pastors have benefited from Dann Spader's Healthy Church Seminars. He encourages churches to analyze their activities to see how many are geared for the congregation alone vs. how many are designed to reach non-Christians.

Dann recommends a three-step outreach, which he describes with an agricultural analogy. He says we should…

1. **plan activities that help our members cultivate relationships with unbelievers;**
2. **find creative, relevant ways to plant the gospel message in people's hearts; and,**
3. **schedule events designed to reap decisions/disciples for Christ, offering people an opportunity to respond to God in a setting that doesn't seem too strange or confusing if they're unfamiliar with church.**

The Blessed Hope Church in Waterville, Maine has a unique cultivating ministry, which they call dinner theater. Our editor attended one of their plays and then interviewed some people who were involved. We hope God will use this interview to spark creative ideas for outreach in the minds of many readers.

An Interview with Pastor Tim Setzer, Debbie Bowden (producer), Brian LaPlant (director), and Joyce Norton

ACW: Where did you come up with the idea of a dinner theater?

Tim: We have a children's drama/musical ministry called King's Kids. Debbie was in charge of producing one King's Kids production each year, and sometimes two. At some point we began talking about how we'd like to have some drama for adults.

ACW: Was anyone else involved in the early planning?

Tim: Yes, our good friend Brian here. He was the director of the local opera house, and he and Debbie have

(Photos continued on page 16, interview continued on page 18)



The Lighthouse

A New Light in the Community

How several local churches turned a donated neighborhood market into an outreach for Christ

By Elaine Moody



Rev. Greg Moody

We waited, continuing to arrange the potato salads, chips, rolls and condiments on the bar just inside the front door. Someone had made brownies and cookies to round out our offering. The grill had been fired up and Dick had begun the task of flipping hamburgers and hotdogs. Still, we waited—Beth and Cindy, Greg and Kevin and I. Beth and her crew had canvassed the area a few days earlier leaving invitations to our barbecue at the various apartments. Wasn't anyone going to take us up on our invitation?

Then, a few kids walked over from the housing across the road. "Are you guys here for the barbecue?" With nods and wide grins our first all-family venture at The Lighthouse was underway! Tara was so excited. She'd been here before with her dad, but tonight her mom was coming and bringing her new baby. "How old is your new baby?" She stopped jumping and answered, "I don't know. You'll have to ask my mom!."

As I stood on the driveway's edge looking down the slope toward the housing complex, I had the privilege and the thrill of just standing in awe of God at work in our little city—in this small neighborhood. They were coming! Dads and moms–single and married–were strolling up the hill towards us. And the children–oh, those precious children–were leading the way. I imagined that this was only a taste of the elation Jesus felt when he stood on the Mount of Olives watching the numerous lost and hurting making their way, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to hear the truth of our almighty and compassionate God. What a flood of realization of God's power and love washed over me. Praying, planning, and praising were again being blessed with God's action.

This is exactly the kind of thing area churches and, specifically, Presque Isle Neighborhood Ministries, have been asking God to do. The board is made up of pastors and lay leaders from Advent Christian (Castle Hill and State Road), Baptist, and Wesleyan churches. Although this group of believers had great vision for ministry, the building needed lots of work before any ministry could happen on site. Praying, praising, painting, hammering, installing new windows and a new oil heater began the long preparation process.

The Lighthouse is an example of God at work through us. Many weeks have seen some of these children gathering to hear about God's love and his plan for them. A weekly after-school drop-in for young children and a Good News Club through Child Evangelism Fellowship on Friday evenings have been offered here at The Lighthouse. The Holy Spirit has used these tools to usher five children into his kingdom. Yes, God has already been at work in



Volunteer Pat Bagley helps with the renovations to the Lighthouse

this small, unassuming building that is becoming a safe place to gather for the families in this neighborhood. The hope of the churches involved in this ministry is that God will be lifted up through serving others here in this place. As he is lifted up, he will draw all men, women and children to himself.

The summer has seen a break in the after-school program and the Good News Club (plans are to start up again when the school year begins). However, each weekday this summer the Lighthouse is a site for children from the area to receive meals from the school district. This is yet another opportunity to let the people of this community know of the Lighthouse's existence. On Friday evenings a prayer group led by a local Christian psychiatrist is held here. The focus of this prayer is local church renewal and revival.

Presque Isle Neighborhood Ministries has great faith that God will work through ministries offered from this small building. Plans are now developing for a Christian recovery group to begin meeting here. What a joy and privilege to offer support, God's love, and Christ's power to people who are struggling through addiction and bondage. Pizza nights, movie nights, meals for seniors and training for parents are just some of the potential offerings. The hope is that many more ideas for ministry will begin to be placed in the hearts and minds of area Christians and that these people will step out to join us as we serve to reach our community for Christ.

As I think back to my experience on that warm summer evening and the opportunity to participate in our tiny effort to show God's love to others by serving them, I am struck by two very important truths. What a wonderful God we serve—stirring the hearts of men and women to acts of love. What an awesome heavenly Father we adore—guiding our steps and our hearts as we come together to serve others, that they may know Jesus Christ and his love and power at work in them.✞



Elaine and Greg Moody

Jesus Blessing Christ Chapel



Northern Pines Retreat Center, Christ Chapel's new facility

By Rev. Ray Penny

Christ Chapel began in 1987 as a weekly Bible-study group of Advent Christians who lived in the Raymond-Casco-Naples area of Sebago Lake, just a forty-five minute drive west of Portland, Maine. This Bible study was conducted by Pastor Ray Penney of the Portland Advent Christian Church. Sensing the need for a strong Bible-teaching church in the Sebago Lake region, the group was leased the Main Street property (a telephone building) beginning on Memorial Day weekend in May of 1988 and purchased it with a loan from the denominational church loan building fund on December 8, 1988. Six families from the Portland A.C. Church were commissioned at a worship service on May 22, 1988, to begin this new work.

By March 1989, the garage of the building was renovated into a sanctuary which could seat 125 people. It soon was filled after a telephone campaign was conducted seeking non-churched families. By mid-1992, Christ Chapel became completely self-supporting and, by mid-1995, the chapel moved into its third sanctuary which was a new addition seating 150–185 people. This church has witnessed 100 new believers being baptized and discipled.

During 1994, special prayer sessions were conducted as groups met to pray over sections of a map of the town of Raymond laid out on tables. One of the places specifically prayed about was a retreat center, located in Raymond and adjacent to Crescent Lake, called Northern Pines. Many different types of groups met there including New-Agers who practiced Yoga and other groups known for their questionable behavior. The church, led by Pastor Ray, prayed against the negative spiritual influence of this place. Little did Christ Chapel know that this kind of praying would play a part in the future growth of the church.

It soon became evident that the Main street property was not able to support the growing demands of its Christian Education program. A search began for a larger piece of property where the church could expand and grow. However, after two years of praying and searching, nothing was found that could meet the church's need. In 2000, Envision Realty Corporation purchased a large parcel of land adjacent to Crescent Lake, which included the Northern Pines retreat center. The center had three floors, housing twenty-four motel rooms, a commercial kitchen, handicap bathrooms and a function hall, which accommodated 250 people. Once it became known Envision Realty was about to offer the retreat center as a gift to a non-profit organization for a million-dollar write-off, five organizations immediately expressed interest, along with the town of Raymond. However, the town saw more problems than opportunities. Learning of Christ Chapel's need for space, Envision Realty approached the church after bypassing all other interested parties and offered to Christ Chapel the gift of the fully-equipped retreat center plus ten acres of land. This donation would be received after an eight-month lease of one dollar per month. The donation was received on December 6, 2001. Seven years after exercising spiritual-warfare prayer over this location, this center was given to the church as a gift!



The telephone building, Christ Chapel's original building



Christ Chapel's new sanctuary



Rev. Ray Penny

Renovations were made during the following year. V.B.S. and youth events were conducted there. Then, on September 7, 2003, Christ Chapel began worshipping at the new site with a memorable service of thanksgiving. Many motel rooms have been converted into classrooms, offices, a prayer room, and two guest rooms.

The Main Street property has become Christ Chapel's Ministry Center where many community events are held and community needs met. This property houses the town food pantry which serves up to 20 families. A meal offered free to the community is provided on a monthly basis. Undoubtedly, youth events will soon be conducted by a new youth pastor, which the congregation is presently seeking. This center will expand the ministry of Christ Chapel in the community.

However, Pastor Ray is looking forward to the time when a new church building can be constructed on the land adjacent to the parking lot at Northern Pines, and the present worship center be returned to a retreat center where retreat groups will meet in the future. Christ Chapel will have a wonderful opportunity to minister to others from outside its present fellowship, thus making a further contribution to the kingdom of God.✞

A little church a BIG ministry

By Carol Murch

Some people wonder about the effectiveness of a small church. Well, let me tell you about a small congregation in Auburn, Maine, that has a very effective ministry, both locally and in third-world countries. Approximately five years ago, Auburn Advent Christian Church came within one vote of closing. However, the Lord was not done using that church for his honor and glory.

A few years ago, Auburn A.C. Church had an interim minister, Paul Bernard, who planted the idea of collecting outdated and unused medical supplies from our local hospitals and nursing homes, and sending them to third-world countries where they don't have access to such supplies in their medical facilities. Our people volunteer to collect, inventory, and pack for shipment, the supplies that the medical facilities donate. That has been a very effective ministry for a church with approximately thirty-five to forty people.

Our church has been truly blessed with a wonderful group of musicians, who also volunteer their time and talents. For such a small congregation to have such a good variety of talent is rather unusual, especially when you hear of larger churches that have a difficult time finding musicians for paid positions.

Even though we don't presently have many official committees in our church, people just seem to jump in where they see a need that they can fill, and get it done––anything from carpentry repair jobs, hospitality-type jobs at our fellowship times, or getting new curtains for the multipurpose room. Whatever the need, someone always takes care of it without being asked.

Many times one hears the phrase "church family." Well, at Auburn A.C. Church there is a genuine camaraderie among the people, and they really care for each other, as a family would be expected to do. They enjoy the intimacy of a small church, and even though our church is slowly growing in attendance, it is experiencing spiritual growth, which is an important aspect of church life.



Rev. Ronald Murch









While our membership is small, we have several regular attendees from other denominational backgrounds who are a big part of the group. They are a welcome addition to the congregation, and they participate in the various ministries as much as the members.

Our pastor, Rev. Ronald Murch, is mentoring a pastoral intern, Russell Giasson. Consequently, we are fortunate to have him and his wife, Karalee, provide musical and teaching talents to our ministries. They have been instrumental in getting a Sunday School started up again, and they provide the contemporary "praise" part of the worship service.

Six years ago, a similar situation was taking place at our Bridgton Advent Christian Church. They had voted to close if Rev. Murch wasn't willing, or able, to serve as pastor. The Lord used Pastor Murch to keep that church open until a younger pastor, Bruce LeBlanc, was ready to take over. So it goes to show that the Lord still needs the ministry of our smaller churches … and even though Pastor Murch is at retirement age, the Lord isn't through using the talents he has to offer, either.✞

Epilogue: The Wife of Noble Character

A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in

Rev. Joanne Hunter:
Another type of
Proverbs 31 Woman

By Barabara Hunter Miller

For the past two decades, Rev. Joanne Hunter, a retired high school math teacher, has pastored Castle Hill Advent Christian Church, a rural church located in the woods of northern Maine. This past spring Rev. Hunter fell asleep in the Lord. The following was written by her daughter for the memorial service.

My mother was a woman of many virtues. She was an artist, a poet, a photographer, a musician, a teacher, a counselor, a preacher, and in her younger days she was even an athlete. What she wasn't was a housekeeper. I have a few childhood memories of my father wielding a mop, but none of my mother doing so. I suppose that someone must have cleaned the bathrooms now and then in those distant days, but I don't remember it.

My mother was not interested in external appearances. She did not teach me about hairstyles, fashion, or interior decorating because she wasn't interested in those things. She taught me how to blow a raw egg out of its shell through a pinhole so that the shell could be preserved to paint for Easter, how to fly a kite and how to make May baskets out of tissue paper. She had a purple dress but only because I made it for her. She generally took little more thought to how she would be clothed than do the lilies of the field.

27 She watches over the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 **Her children arise and call her blessed;**
her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many women have done excellently,

My mother was an excellent cook and there were always homemade sweets in her kitchen. However, if she ever rose while it was yet night, it was to look for a lunar eclipse, meteor showers or the aurora borealis. It certainly wasn't to make anyone breakfast. My mother did not like to be uncomfortable and put some planning and effort into seeing that she would be well-fed, kept cool, and safe from black flies (which she hated). The rest of us were welcome to share her arrangements, but if they didn't suit, we were free to fend for ourselves.

My mother planted almost nothing, let alone vineyards. Her philosophy of gardening was that she didn't understand why someone would dig up what wanted to grow in a certain place and then plant things that didn't want to grow there. She loved lupines in the field but not near the house. They gave her hay fever.

My mother certainly extended her hand to the poor. She gathered no treasures on earth except friends and family and was as generous with her possessions as she was with her affection. She hugged everyone who would hold still long enough. If she owned something that she thought would give someone else pleasure, she gave it away. She believed that every living soul is one of God's children, even if some are lost children. I don't remember her ever saying a mean or ill-intended word about another person.

My mother's beauty was her spirit, her intellect, her emotional warmth and empathy for others, her own radiant joy in the beauty of God's creation. She was a woman who loved the Lord and everyone else within reach.

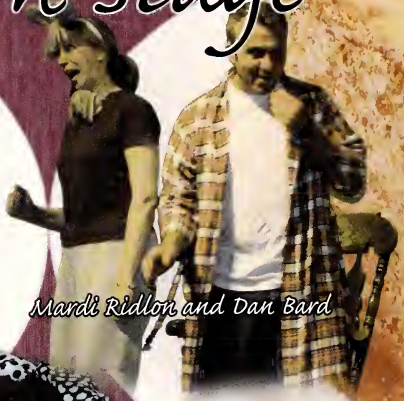
My sisters and I, the only maidens available, learned feminine culture from other sources and not from our mother. From her we learned to believe in God and in ourselves, to notice the incredible beauty of our natural surroundings, to respect the earth and cause intentional harm to no living thing. We learned to use our own gifts to help others and to strive to make the world a better place for having been here.

My mother may not have been exactly the virtuous woman described by King Solomon, but her value to her family and friends was far above rubies. Our father's life was enriched by her presence, far more than if he had treasures of gold and silver. And her children do, indeed, rise up and call her blessed.✞

On Stage



Donna Pitts



Mardi Ridlon and Dan Bard

Scenes fr
Hope's T



Mardi Ridlon



Bridget Campbell



Mark Boivin and
Lona Bourassa



Behind the scenes





Brian LaPlante (director) and Lois Bowden



Debbie Bowden (Producer)

m Blessed
ner Theater

Joyce Norton





Bruce Ogeka, Dan Band (actor), Elwood Ellis, and Earlene Gibbs

been involved in the high school drama for years. They'd also done dinner theaters in the community.

ACW: What other things prepared you for this role, Brian?

Brian: I worked with a gentleman from Russia who was the lighting director for the Kirov's Ballet. He taught me a lot about lighting and rigging.

ACW: What was the church's first production?

Tim: It was called Every Crook and Nanny. We didn't have the resources to do a full dinner theater, so we had a dessert at intermission. That was seven years ago.

ACW: Did it have a Christian message?

Tim: Not really. The whole idea was to produce a quality evening that Christians could bring their non-Christian friends to, just for the sake of building relationships.

Debbie: We started it purely as an outreach – a night of fun and fellowship and networking. It wasn't meant to have a religious theme, but to bring people together. But, occasionally, we slip in a little message.

ACW: Was there any resistance to that kind of low-key approach among your members?

Tim: Some people think that everything we do should have a strong spiritual message. But a lot of them change their thinking after watching others use the dinner theater to establish friendships, or build better friendships. It allows people to see our church and find out that we're not a bunch of psychos in here.

ACW: How good are the plays you do?

Tim: They're as good as any local production that's done without professionals. Brian taught drama at the high school. Dan Bard, who also helps us, has been in all kinds of productions at the opera house.

ACW: How would you compare the dinner theater to community opera?

Brian: It's on a smaller scale, technically. But, as far as having talented people, we're as well equipped as the opera.

ACW: Who selects the scripts?

Tim: Debbie and Brian. If we go with a company like Lillineas, we don't have to worry about it. We've had to edit some other things we've used. They may be funny, but not appropriate for everybody.

Debbie: Lillineas has Christian material that's clean and fun, but it doesn't "hit them in the face" with a sermon.

Does it work? A brief discussion with two first time attenders

ACW: Why did you come tonight?

Michelle: One of the guys in the play works for our construction company, and a friend invited me.

ACW: What do you think it's going to be like?

Michelle: I've heard it's pretty funny.

ACW: You came because a friend asked you to come?

Judy: Yes. She asked if I was interested and told me what it was about. I thought it sounded like it would be a good time.

ACW: Have you always had the plays in the church's facilities?

Tim: We actually started at the Hinkley School and had it there for four or five years.

ACW: Since then you've built a gym, which you also use for dinner theaters. Was that a hard sell to the congregation?

Debbie: Yes, there was a lot of discussion about it. It was expensive; that's why we said we'd do two plays a year. We usually don't have to advertise in the fall. The hospital is our biggest audience. I sell tickets to the church for a week and then go to the hospital. We started doing two nights with 160 attendance. Last fall we did six nights and had 230 people in attendance each night. So, it's really grown.

ACW: What do you usually charge?

Tim: For a play with dessert we started at $8.00; but people told us we should charge more, so we increased it to $12.00. For a dinner theater, we charge maybe $20.00.

ACW: Do you make a good amount of money?

Tim: Last year we made $10,000.00 for the six nights. That's what we cleared after paying for the food.

ACW: What do you do with the profits?

Tim: Some of our proceeds go to the oncology unit at the hospital. The hospital helps us tremendously. We rent things from them like tablecloths and napkins, and we buy food through them. This year the proceeds go to Cancer Survivors Day.

ACW: Do a lot of your members bring non-Christian friends?

Tim: Many do. But it's become such a big deal that we have as many people coming without anybody from our church inviting them.



Blessed Hope's new state-of-the-art multipurpose building specifically designed for community outreach

ACW: How do your members help if they aren't acting?

Tim: People from our congregation wait on tables, cook the desserts, clean up afterwards, work in the kitchen, do dishes, and wash pots and pans.

ACW: Joyce, how have you helped with the productions?

Joyce: Usually I wait on tables.

ACW: How do you think the dinner theaters have affected the church?

Joyce: They've made the community more aware of us.

ACW: Are the actors and actresses all from your church?

Tim: A lot of them are not. But when some non-Christians want to act, they end up being with us through all the nights of rehearsal. In the process, we develop some really neat relationships and often have opportunity to witness to them.

ACW: Have you seen people become involved in your church as a result of the theater?

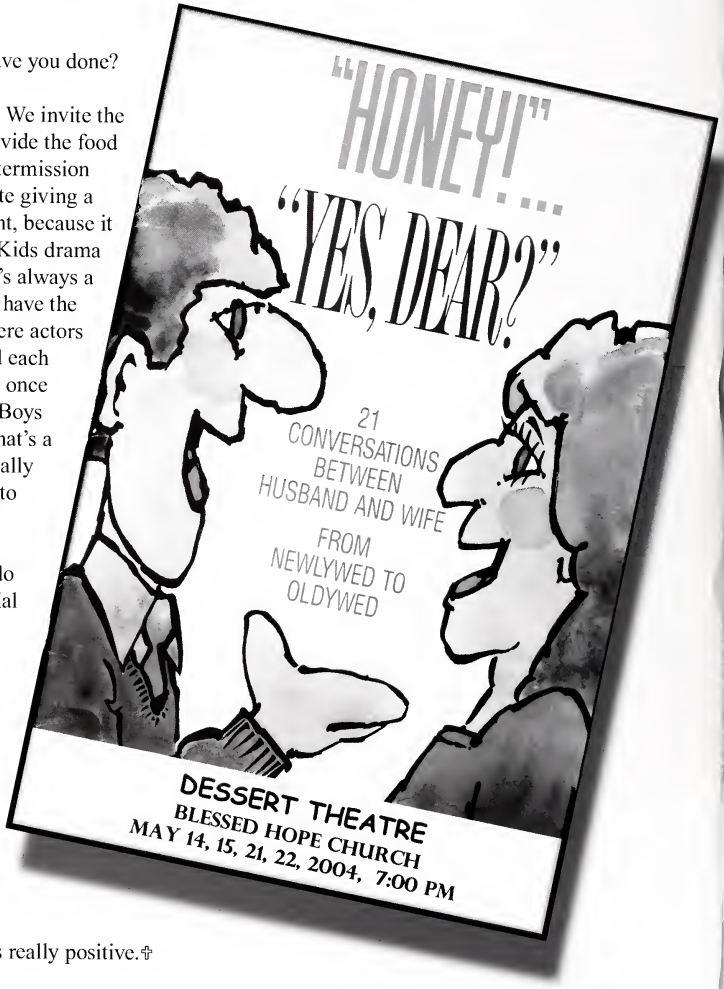
Tim: The first year we did it in honor of a man who was battling cancer. He eventually died, but his family started coming to church. Other people have also come as a result of being involved.

ACW: Has this kind of outreach changed the perspective of your people?

Tim: It's one of the causes of change. We went through Dann Spader's material, and took a serious look at everything we were doing, asking, "Is this for us, or for people outside the church?" We were like most churches; almost 100% of everything we did was for us. We weren't doing much to reach out. But you can't just start sharing the gospel with everybody; you have to build relationships. That's the idea behind the dinner theater.

ACW: What other outreaches have you done?

Tim: We do Super Bowl parties. We invite the community to come, and we provide the food at no charge. We have a short intermission with a video of a Christian athlete giving a testimony. That's a *planting* event, because it presents the gospel. The King's Kids drama also does planting because there's always a Christian message in it. We also have the Living Last Supper, a drama where actors pose like DiVinci's painting, and each disciple gives a testimony. Then, once a year, we invite the Down East Boys to do a Gospel Music concert. That's a *reaping* event, because they actually invite people to receive Christ into their lives.



ACW: Do you think you'll ever do a heavy drama or one with a social agenda?

Tim: Yes, I think we could. Last year the script presented the idea that a relationship with the Lord is what really matters in all of life. We had people fill out feedback cards, and one couple said public theater should leave Christian stuff out of it. But we don't consider ourselves a public theater; we're a church. Most of the feedback was really positive.✞

Faith



in the midst of C.H.A.O.S.

By Melyca Storman Waterman

I went in for my first ultrasound, excited as every mother is, wondering if it was a boy or a girl. I wanted to hear a heartbeat and know everything was okay. We learned that *she* had 10 toes and fingers and weighed about a pound and a half. Our doctor noticed that the baby's lungs did not look right—they were enlarged. He arranged for us to go to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to see specialists. Not much else was said at that time.

Two weeks later we flew to Philadelphia. After a fetal echo cardiogram, MRI and a high-tech ultrasound, they were able to diagnose that our daughter had Congenital High Airway Obstruction or C.H.A.O.S. There was a webbing of skin or cyst completely blocking the airway to the lungs. As a result, her lungs were enlarged and her diaphragm was flattened. There was danger of her heart tilting and her abdomen filling with a dangerous fluid called ascites.

We were told that less than twenty babies have been diagnosed with C.H.A.O.S. world-wide and only a handful has survived. The outcome in each case was vastly different.

Then came the words, "abortion is still an option." We quickly blurted out, "That is not an option!"

We wondered, "Where do we go from here?" Fetal surgery was suggested. They explained that the fetus would be taken partially out of the womb and all of the blockage in the airway surgically removed. Then the fetus would be returned to the womb to continue developing and be delivered closer to the normal due date. They suggested that this would, hopefully, prevent any further damage. However, this had only been done on fetal lambs and was unsuccessful. At that point it was the best chance we could give her, and we decided to do it.

We came back home and informed our families and church. The prayer chain was activated and prayers began going up everywhere.

The plan was to go to Philadelphia Children's Hospital and stay there until long after the baby was born. Arrangements were made for people to stay with me after the surgery, for as long as I would be on complete bed rest. We would stay at the Ronald McDonald house in Camden, N.J.

Scott and I returned to Children's Hospital on Dec.1, 2003, prepared for what was ahead. When we had our next ultra sound, everything was the same, but it hadn't worsened. The doctor said " I don't know what you are doing, but go back to Ronald McDonald House and tell the other mothers there to do the same thing." We told him about all the people who were praying for us. He said, "It is working."

We needed a miracle, and we got it!

We returned home for the holidays and continued weekly ultrasounds to make sure everything was all right and did not worsen.

After New Year's Eve we went back to the hospital, and on February 13, 2004, our daughter, Faith Ann Waterman, was born by E.X.I.T. procedure (Ex Utero Intrapartum Treatment), with the help of twenty-five medical personnel. A twelve-inch incision was made, and the baby's head and shoulders were wrapped in foil to keep her warm. They were allowed only 45 minutes to perform a tracheotomy to make sure she had a source of air. The tracheotomy was successfully done in less than 45 minutes. Then she was taken out into the hall to meet her Dad and anxious grandparents before going to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

I was sent to another hospital, so it was two days before I got to see my beautiful, petite daughter. She weighed 5 lbs. 6 ounces and was 18 ½ inches long. We couldn't hold her for 14 days. I didn't feel much like a mother, except that I was providing milk. This was not how I pictured being a mother. Where was that special bond? Mothers are supposed to nurture, and all I could do was stare at her. That is what I did for eight to 12 hours a day while she was there, attached to a feeding tube, air tubes, and a lot of other monitoring devises.

Scott and I had to learn how to take care of a baby with a tracheotomy. We learned how to clean the tubes, change the trach which needed to be inserted into the hole in her throat, insert the feeding tube, infant CPR, and how to take over much of her daily care. We were finally beginning to feel like parents.

Faith did not know life beyond her crib in the N.I.C.U. for three months. When she did come home, it was surreal. The best part was that she was home nine months ahead of schedule. She was truly a miracle.

Faith is now six months old and eats from a bottle. She has physical, occupational and speech therapy, weekly. A home nurse comes in to weigh her two times a week. She will not be able to talk until after she has surgery to remove the webbing. The doctors say she will have the surgery when she is 18 months to two-years old. We are teaching her sign language. We cannot hear her laugh, cry, coo or giggle, but we are learning to listen to the air exchange through her trach that resembles these sounds.

Faith is truly a miracle and the absolute delight of our lives. After all she has been through, she smiles all the time and has a wonderfully calm and peaceful spirit. She is the result of faith-filled prayers from so many people in so many places. Thanks to so many of you for your prayerful support, and thanks to my husband, Scott, who stood strong by our side through all of this. Most of all thanks to GOD who is still working Miracles.✞

Melyca Storman Waterman is daughter-in-law of Rev. and Mrs. George and Carol Waterman. She and her husband, Scott, attend the Oxford Advent Christian Church in Oxford, Maine.



Faith and her grandmother, Carol Waterman



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

There are many catchy phrases used in advertising these days. One that stands out in my mind lately is used by a credit card company to tout the advantages of their card over the others. The phrase, "What's in your wallet?" offers a tremendous challenge to every disciple of Christ.

It has been said that Jesus taught more about money than any other subject. Some have suggested that he did so knowing human nature so well. The thing people value the most is what they will give themselves to wholeheartedly. Certain teachings of Jesus bear out this truth. The account of the widow (Mark 13:41f) is one of them. A commonly used passage in Matthew's Gospel is another. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

In that same passage, Jesus reminds his followers that, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." And then to clarify what he means, Jesus adds rather emphatically, "You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24)

Here lies the challenge for followers of Christ. Don't let your love of money get in the way of your devotion to Jesus. While most Christians give verbal assent to Jesus as "Master," it behooves every disciple of Christ to "put your money where your mouth is." In other words, discipleship requires devotion that is evident by one's actions. Dear Christian, you cannot have your cake and eat it too!

Advent Christians have been known as giving people. I believe it is because of our devotion to Jesus and to the work of his kingdom. This is no time to change! In fact, the work of Christ through the Advent Christian Church demands a greater commitment to giving. It is time for all of God's people to demonstrate their devotion by responding as the Master desires.

As the work of the kingdom moves forward, I urge you to prayerfully consider your part. The challenge is great, but our God is greater! He will supply, through the faithful giving of his people, the resources necessary for the work of Christ around the world. It's time to take into account "what's in your wallet." Through the generous giving of Advent Christian people, we will accomplish much for God's glory!✞

(Editorial continued)

"Could you send a truck to pick it up and bring it back to your shop?"

"Well, Mr. Wheaton, unless you're willing to pay a transportation fee, which would be pretty high, you'll probably want to bring it in yourself."

"But, John! It's an unwieldy, eight-foot-long couch! I don't own a truck. What good is a lifetime warranty if I can't use it without renting a U-Haul and badgering friends to injure their backs helping me load and unload it?"

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Mr. Wheaton, but that's company policy. We'll be happy to fix it if you bring it in."

"Is it also company policy to make your customers bring in their faulty refrigerators, stoves, and washing machines?"

"No, we have servicemen who repair those items in the home. But we don't do that with couches."

"But why? This must be a three hundred pound piece of furniture we're talking about. Can't you please send a man out to fix it? We paid a lot for this because we were led to believe you'd provide better service than some fly-by-night discount store. Do you honestly think this is good service?"

John finally suggested I speak with his supervisor, who eventually decided to discuss the matter with the owner. After three weeks of my persistent phone calls, two men came to our house to reattach the brace with a single screw. The job took three minutes, tops.

At some point I realized that my frustrating furniture repair experience was a kind of parable illustrating how many unchurched people must feel. Like broken couches, they need repair. (Don't we all?) They need foundational truths reattached to their sagging lives, a spiritual spring replacement, and a moral reupholstering.

I suspect many unchurched people are aware of their need for a "service call." However, we in the church usually expect them to come to *us* for repairs "on-site." Promiscuous teens can get their morals refurbished if they'll only join our youth group. Godless liberals can get their minds renewed if they'll just show up to hear our pastor expound the Word. Tree-hugging, rap-singing, tattoo-bearing pagans will discover a new life in Christ, if they'll attend our Easter cantata.
We'll do almost anything to get them into our "repair shop." We make special efforts to welcome folks, advertising in the newspaper and giving personal invitations. "You need help? You need service? We're all about service here at First Church. Just come in between ten and twelve on Sunday. You'll find the answers you need right here at our convenient location."

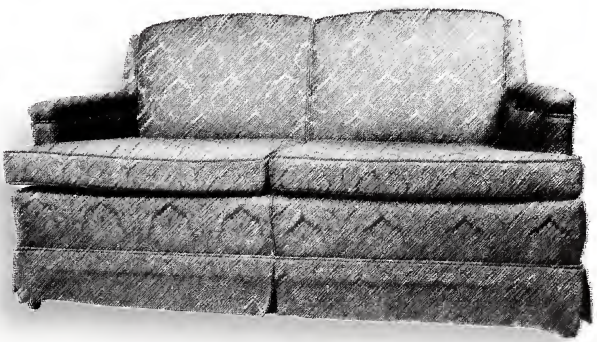
Many hear our invitations and feel like protesting, "My problem is like a big, heavy, badly stained, smelly old couch – and you expect me to bring it to church?" The thought of doing that feels much too awkward, and it seems too great a distance for them to come, culturally speaking.

Jesus had a much better repair strategy: he "came to seek and save those who were lost;" he "did not come to be served, but to serve…" (Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:28). Our Lord spent a lot of time doing "service calls," going to meet the needs of people right where they lived. That kind of service isn't easy, but he calls us to follow him – and promises to go with us (cf. Matthew 28:20).

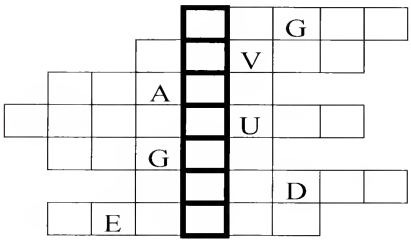
Advent Christian General Conference has vigorously promoted disciple-making for more than a decade. Faithful disciple-making requires service-calls. If we want to have an impact on unbelievers, we'll need to get involved with them wherever they are. This issue of the *Witness* focuses on the ministries of several of our Maine churches who are reaching out to those around them. (I would love to hear similar stories about what your church is doing to make disciples—please send them!)

Recently I learned of a ministry that holds Bible studies at Hooters. (For those who don't know, Hooters is a restaurant featuring scantily clad waitresses.) The Bible study leader justifies meeting there by saying that Jesus was also sometimes found in unwholesome settings in his day. And that Hooters outreach has ministered to many waitresses and patrons who probably wouldn't have gone to a church.

Holding a Bible study at Hooters may not be the right strategy for you or me, but the Lord wants us to make more "service calls" to unbelievers where they're living, working, going to school, and spending leisure time. Grab your spiritual tool kit (God-given compassion, friendliness, your testimony, a gospel booklet or pocket New Testament) and head for the door. There's somebody out there with a three hundred pound problem that just begs for you and the Savior to drop in and do some supernatural service call.✞



FIND A WORD IN THE BIBLE VERSES LISTED TO FILL IN THE BLANKS. THE DARKER BOXES HAVE A HIDDEN MESSAGE WHEN READ DOWN.

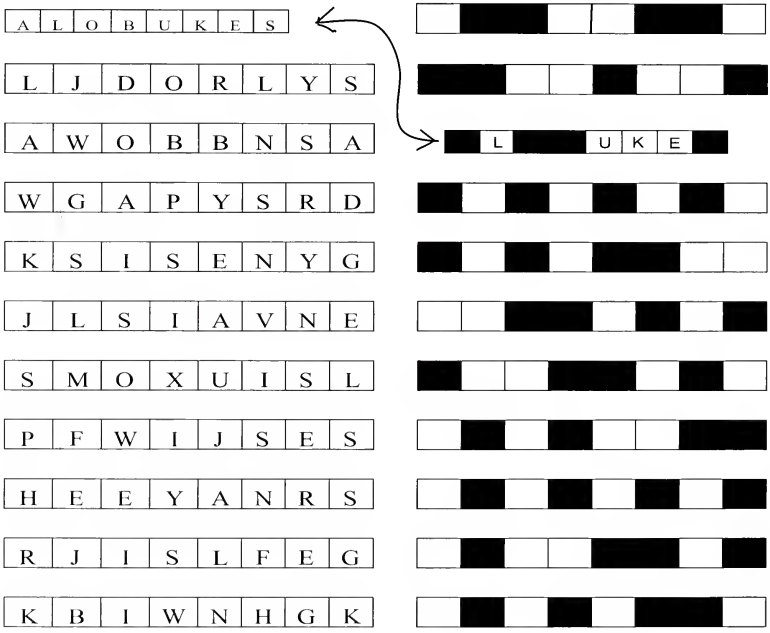


Romans 6:23
John 3:16
Colossians 3:1
Matthew 6:21
I John 1:5
Psalm 119:11
Isaiah 9:2



There is a 4-letter word from the Bible hidden in each row of letters in column1. Match each row in Column 1 with its correct window box in Column 2 so that the hidden word appears in the open windows.

Example:





As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

DROP THE LETTERS DOWN IN THEIR CORRESPONDING COLUMNS TO READ THE BIBLE VERSE PSALM 121:1&2.

C	A	E	D	F	E	A	M	A	I	E	A	E	E	F	E	C
E	D	L	E	F	E	E	M	D	K	E	H	H	E	H	H	E
I	E	M	E	H	H	F	N	H	M	L	L	R	E	L	L	H
O	M	O	I	N	R	O	R	M	M	M	R	S	L	P	P	O
R	O	V	T	O	T	S	U	O	Y	Y	T		O	W		S
	T			S				P			Y		T	Y		

Fill in the blanks with the words listed below.

Shout for ____ to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the _____with gladness; come before him with joyful_____. Know that the Lord is____. It is he who made us, and we are____; we are his_____, the sheep of his _____. Enter his _____with thanksgiving and his courts with_____; give thanks to him and praise his_____. For the Lord is _____and his love endures_____; his faithfulness continues through all_____. Psalm 100

forever	Lord
gates	name
generations	pasture
God	people
good	praise
his	songs
joy	



This ain't your MOMMA'S circle!

By Randee Davis, national W.H & F.M.S. president

The founders of the Woman's Home & Foreign Mission Society realized that our organization should be made up of "locals" or "circles" to encourage unity and support of the local church. Each of these locals would have its own organization and personality. Many of the young women of today do not want to be a part of what some call "my Mama's circle." They express a desire to be a part of a younger organization. We are now somehow faced with the challenge of making the "circle" attractive to these young women.

Circles have the power to make things better, because when women band together, life just seems to get better. It's kind of a "girl thing." As we all know, men and women are different. We respond to things differently. Men tend to fight or flee while women tend to connect and communicate. We form groups. That's how we get things done, and we can GET THINGS DONE! Women are organizational by nature. Circles also make wonderful "support groups." For anyone who could use some encouragement, a good laugh, wonderful fellowship and a life-changing mission, there's a circle.

If circles are really so wonderful, why aren't our younger women rushing to join us? It could be that we haven't done a very good job of showing them how great it is to belong to a circle. For too long we have hidden our light under a bushel. The time has come for us to let our "circle" lights shine! We need to hear some success stories from circles who have already found the secret, turned the corner and are looking to the future with older and younger women alike.

Younger women have different lifestyles than their Mothers did. They may not have time for the traditional monthly meeting and refreshments. Does every circle have to have monthly meetings and refreshments? Of course not! What about children and careers and all the other pressures young women are facing? Each circle should be designed to meet the special needs and circumstances of its individual members. If our goal is to enable women to be all they can be for Christ, we will have to do things differently than we did 100 or 50 or even 20 years ago.

When you think about it, circles are really made up of "girlfriends." I read a story the other day that reminded me of my circle and what we mean to each other. It was very appropriately entitled "Girlfriends":

A young Wyoming girl sat under a tall oak tree sipping iced tea while she visited with her mother. She was soon to wed and her mother had some really good advice to give her.

"Don't ever forget your girlfriends," her mother said. "No matter how much you love your new husband, you're still gonna need your girlfriends. You'll need to still go places with them now and then, and do things with them, even when you might not necessarily want to. And remember that your relatives, your sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers are your girlfriends too. Women depending upon and relating to other women is our responsibility and our gift."



"What a silly piece of advice," the young girl thought to herself. After all, she would soon be married and become a part of the "couple-world." She would no longer be a young girl who needed friends. She did listen to her mother though, because she loved her so and knew what a very wise woman she was. She kept in touch with her girlfriends and even found some new ones along the way. As the years passed by she gradually came to realize that Mom really knew what she was talking about!

Here are some of the things she learned: Girlfriends bring you casseroles and clean your bathroom when you're sick; they'll keep your children and your secrets. Girlfriends give you advice, sometimes you take it and sometimes you don't. Girlfriends don't always agree with you, but they'll always tell you the truth. Girlfriends still love you even when you disagree. Girlfriends laugh with you even when your joke isn't funny. Girlfriends will give showers when your son or daughter gets married or has a baby. Girlfriends are always there for you even during the hardest times. They're there to listen when you lose a job or a friend, or when your children break your heart. Girlfriends listen when your parent's minds and bodies fail. They're there with you when you say those painful "good-byes."

The young girl grew into a wise woman much like her mother. She realized how her daughters, sisters, family and friends blessed her life! When she started out on her adventure, she had no idea what incredible joys and sorrows lay ahead. Nor did she know just how much she would need her "girlfriends."

When women band together they really do get things done! In 1897 a group of "girlfriends" got together and started a circle of friends known as the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society. They all had in common their love for Jesus Christ and the desire to send the Gospel of His Kingdom throughout the world. Their intent was to unite the women of the Advent Christian churches in this great work. We cannot even imagine what these "girlfriends" have meant to each other, and more importantly, to the Lord through the years. We now need our younger "girlfriends" to join with us in keeping this work alive, because ours is truly an unending task to be performed until Jesus returns! We need YOU, girlfriend!✞

What makes your group so special?

Featuring the Women's Home & Foreign Mission Society of LaGrange Advent Christian Church of the Highlands, LaGrange, Illinois.



Coritha Johnson, Kathy Woolfington, Elaine Norwood, Vicki Breja, and Becky O'Connell

We are referred to simply as the "Women's Group." We are the backbone of the church, as it is the Women's Group that rises to the occasion and supports all functions of the church. What works to our advantage is that many of our deaconess duties overlap into our WH&FMS role. Although our group may be small, we are solid with twelve dedicated women who serve Christ. I have come to appreciate the number 12, as it was the exact number Jesus chose for his disciples. The age group of members spans from early 30s to late 60s. To keep the year organized, we have a meeting schedule, which meets the last Friday of each month, rotating in members' homes and including a separate devotional leader. We do make the most of our meetings as they also serve as a "break" for those members with young ones at home.

Our agenda is as follows:
Prayer, eat, fellowship, open the business portion of the meeting with prayer (holding hands in a circle), minutes, treasurer's report, old business, new business, devotional, end in prayer, dessert to follow with any additional activities planned for certain months. Did I mention eating? As we all know, food for women is a source of comfort and a major incentive. We do not hold back on WH&FMS nights! Dues and Least Coin are also collected during the business portion of the meeting.

Activity wise, we have incorporated making bazaar crafts in the August meeting in preparation for our annual bazaar held in November. The bazaar is our largest fund raising activity throughout the year. For variety, we have added building Christmas Shoeboxes in the September meeting. We meet in October for a "Ladies Night Out" which is held at different restaurants – we have a dinner fund that aids in the expense of this night. We host the Adult Christmas party in December that includes all members of the Congregation. At the Adult Christmas Party, we gather, fellowship, eat (of course!), listen to Christmas music and play dirty bingo. In addition, throughout the entire year, we participate in Secret Pals, where we secretly leave cards and small gifts for our sister in Christ to let her know how important and appreciated she is. The revealing is in our December meeting, and new names are then chosen for the following year.

Donations include MAP International, Minute Man, Berkshire Christian College, LaGrange Nurses Association, Penny Crusade, Food Pantry, Church Women United (Least Coin), Samaritans Purse, birthday cards/monetary gift to missionaries, cards to Richard Fell Memorial Scholarship recipients,

and ¼ camp tuition for members' children. In addition, we fulfill our obligation to the Church budget. In previous years we have purchased much-needed items for the church, such as a stove for the kitchen, new tables for activities, a portion of new carpeting and hymnals.

With much of our duties geared toward foreign missions, I felt it necessary that we add more home missions to our circle. As a result, this past year we participated in the Chicago Sun Times, "Season of Sharing Program." This is a program where we provided Christmas gifts to inner city children. It deeply touched us to be involved in this effort, as the children wrote such humbling letters requesting basic necessities such as socks, hats, and school supplies. We provided for 15 children the first year, and pray that more people are led to participate in years to come.

Particularly what makes us special is that we have a wide variety of women who use their God-given talents to the best of their ability. Our group is clearly held together by heartstrings, as one member may be crafty, one may cook well, one may have administrative skills, another can sew, another has the gift of comfort and listening, one can recite scripture, one has a superior business sense, another can sing, another can teach, another can take studious notes and another can balance the books. The combined effort is what makes us so successful. With all of these gifts combined, we will continue steadfastly in our efforts to support the Region and the Conference in the main purpose – "to equip, encourage and enable Advent Christian women to use their gifts and opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ faithfully, urgently and sacrificially until he comes."

I feel that many of the women come and stay for the fellowship and the bond that our circle has. We make no judgment, and if someone is having a particular issue, they are able to talk freely and openly with the group. Similar to a common phrase associated with Las Vegas, our motto is "what is said in the women's meeting stays in the women's meeting." Our meetings are a time to rejoice and come together as women, to build one another up through prayer and devotionals. I can attest from a personal standpoint, late last year I was dealing with a very sensitive issue that seemed to escalate on nights the women were to meet. I feel deeply in my heart that God has placed this wonderful group of women in my life, not only to get us through trying times, but also to gather and lift up one another.

As we move forward, I know there is so much more that we can be doing as a whole. I also know that the Holy Spirit has placed this on my heart and, throughout the year, provides me with fresh ideas, patience, a neutral disposition and with the leadership skills to guide our circle.

Submitted by Sheila Jacobs

Sheila has served as president for the past three years, and prior to this, as treasurer for five years. She is one of the youngest members in the group and it is very inspiring to her to know that the women have faith in her to continue the WH&FMS tradition.

We would like to hear from other locals. If you would like to have your group's story featured in the *AC Witness*, send your reports and pictures to Randee Davis at 2201 Olde Farm Road, Hudson, N.C. 28638 or e-mail them to rdavis@co.caldwell.nc.us. We really want to know What makes your group so special?✞

Pictured at right is Sheila Jacobs. Below are Terry Luesmann and Shirley Pfingston







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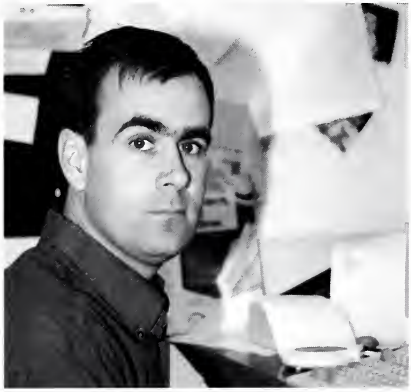
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From the Editor



We're moving! For several years Kathy and I have been hoping to swap our current house for something with more space. We like to have guests in our home, but it's hard to make them feel comfortable when they have to share a chair with one of our children. Our new house will have more than twice the living area. The realtor thinks it will require a literal "act of God" for us to work out the details; but, so far, we're scheduled to both sell our home and buy another in a single day.

So lately I've been thinking a lot about moving. Few things offer as much grief. There's the cost, the time-limitations, the damaged possessions, and the dented walls. The very day we sell our house we'll have to vacate the property, and, since we can't finalize the purchase of the other house until that same day, we'll have no place to vacate to. So we'll have to rent a moving van and store everything we own in it for the interim. Since the house we're buying is 65 years old and looks like it's never seen a vacuum or mop, my wife plans to devote an entire day to hunting dust bunnies and disinfecting bathrooms. I'm scheduled to spend the day making trips between my new castle and the dumpster, carrying away everything the current occupants are sure to leave behind. (We're buying a house and we still haven't seen ninety-percent of the floors and not a single closet wall!)

Of course, before either house could be bought or sold, I had to watch a complete stranger (a.k.a. "housing inspector") ruthlessly and maliciously examine every square inch of my domicile. This gives me the opportunity to spend every waking minute, up to closing day, fixing problems with my house that don't even exist! When the housing inspector couldn't find any real problems with our house (which is only nine years old), he focused his attention on future problems, such as a roof that *may*

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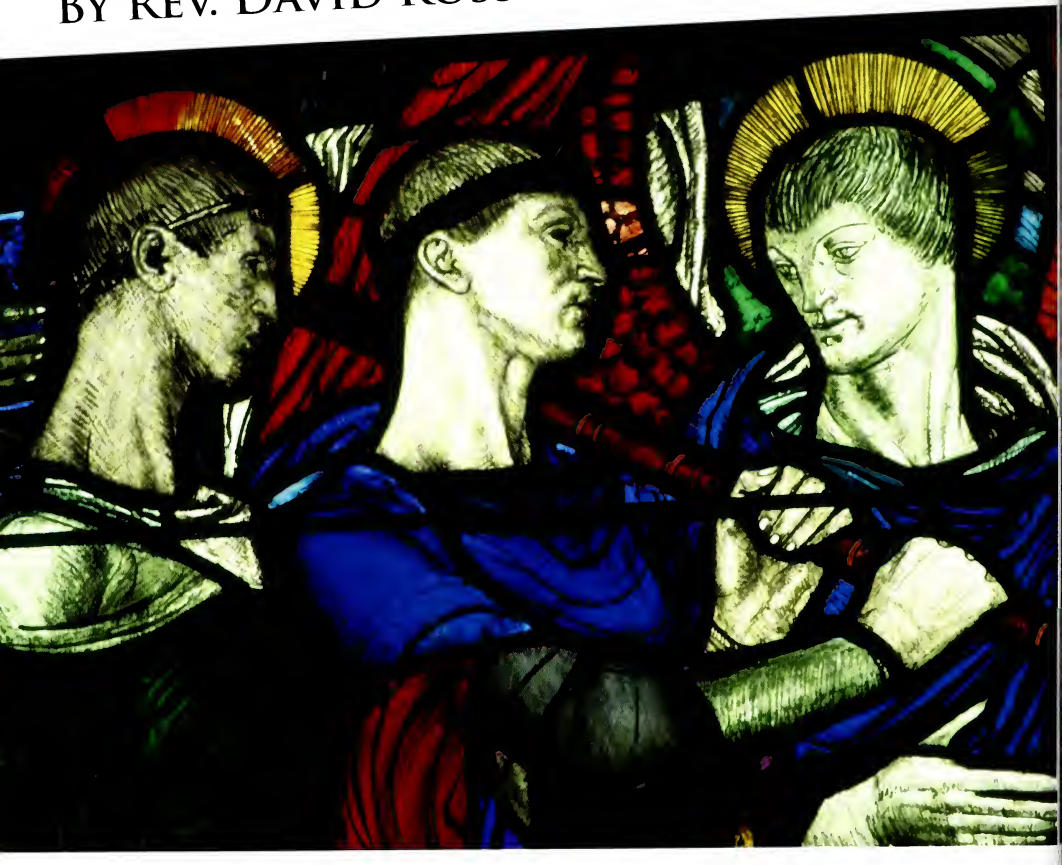
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WHAT IS DISCIPLEMAKING? PART I

By Rev. David Ross



Three Men Who Shaped My Life

Several months ago one of our pastors, Rev. David W. Davis, wrote to ask the following question:



Rev. David W. Davis

"We have heard a lot about disciplemaking over the past few years, but I would like someone to tell me exactly what it means to make disciples. Would you please publish a good explanation of what is involved in making disciples?"

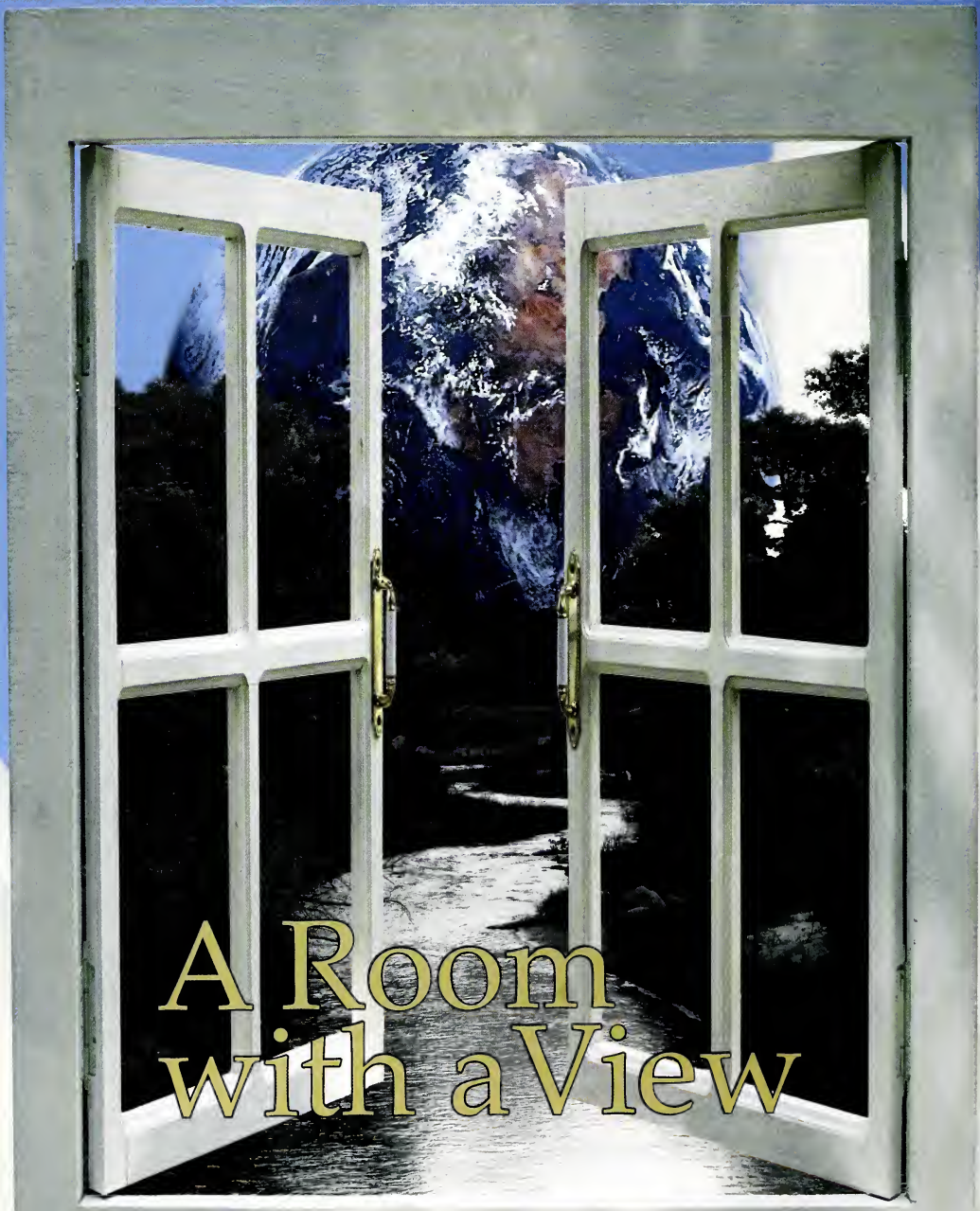
To answer this question we asked one of Advent Christian General Conference's leading proponents of disciplemaking, former executive director Rev. David Ross, to share his views and experiences on the subject. The following is part one of a three-part series answering the question:

What is disciplemaking?

The rustic cabin was small. In fact, had I not been only ten years old, there wouldn't have been room to stand upright in the upstairs loft where our two bunks were. On one of these bunks I sat waiting for Dad to return from the altar service in the big tabernacle. Several New England campgrounds have honored the tradition of the early Millerites, who had little time or interest for modern amenities in construction of their buildings. After all, since Jesus is returning soon, why be bothered with painting the buildings or furnishing them with creature comforts?

But the rustic old cabin seemed like a palace to me, because I got to share the whole week there with my dad. Night after night he would preach his heart out in the big tabernacle, then remain to pray with the earnest seekers who made their way down the aisle to kneel in repentance at the old wooden altar. This night he remained longer than usual, counseling with a rough, stocky fellow who just could not seem to find assurance of forgiveness. "I'm just not good enough!" I heard the man wail these words again and again, until I drifted off to our cabin to await the completion of Dad's responsibilities.

(continued on page 20)


A Room
with a View

During the past few years Advent Christian churches have developed a renewed interest in prayer. Many of these churches have dedicated part of their facilities for the purpose of prayer, creating "prayer rooms" where members engage in the vital ministry of prayer. Even the national office of Advent Christian General Conference, in Charlotte, N.C., has designated a room to be used exclusively for prayer. Following is one church's experience in establishing their...

Room with a View

By Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

Pray continually (1 Thess. 5:17)!

But in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your request to God (Phil. 4:6)!

Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest (Mt. 9:37)!

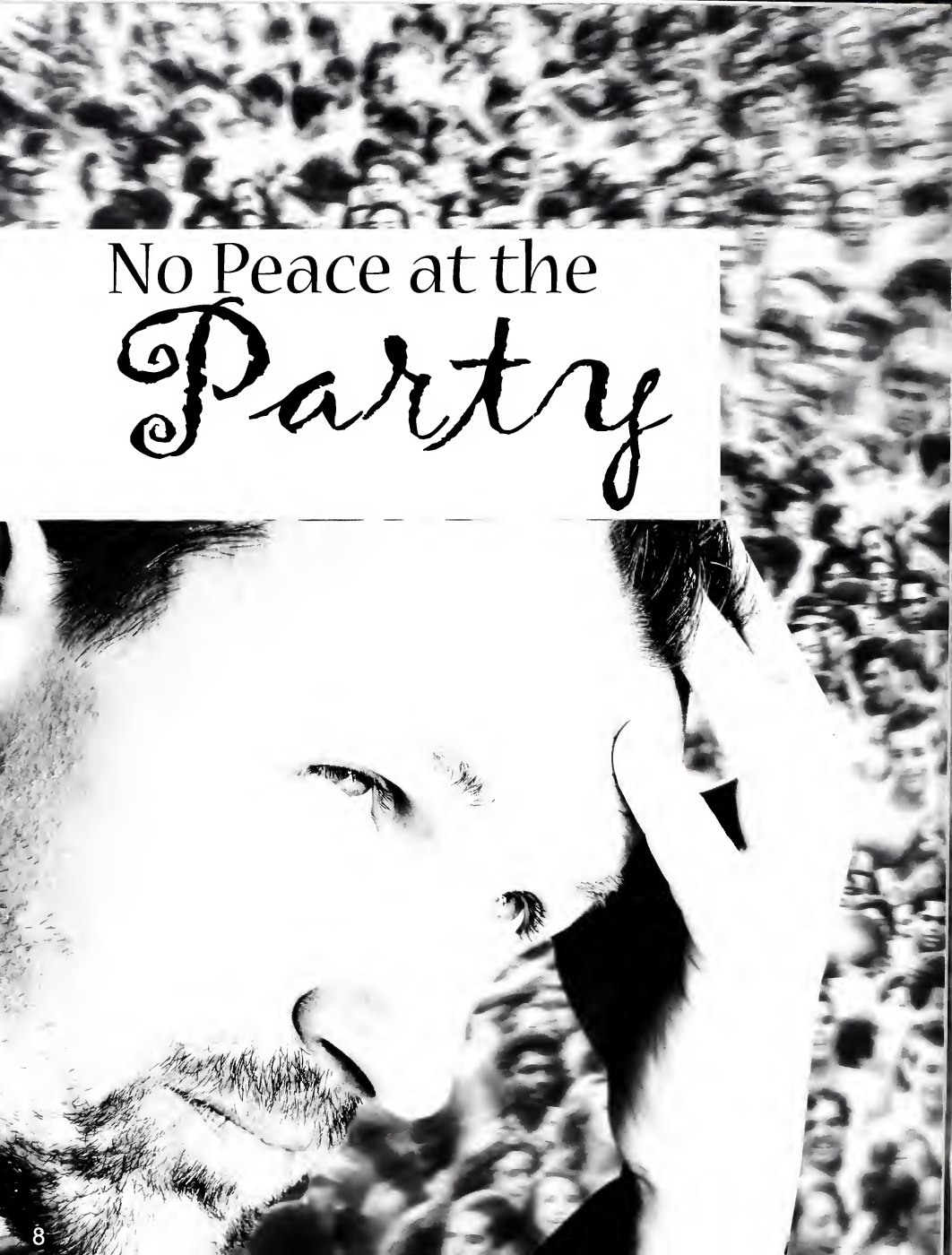
If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2 Chr. 7:14).

These types of admonitions fill the pages of the Scriptures and help the believer understand how important it is to maintain a healthy relationship with God. From a divine perspective, God is interested in seeing a demonstration of a person's dependence on him, and nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the practice of prayer. Viewed from a human angle, prayer is the lifeline to the believer's source of strength and wisdom: God.

Sadly, in many places prayer has become an addendum for the believer and even for the church. In years past, prayer was a more visible part of the daily Christian practice. Unfortunately, those who faithfully participate in a discipline of prayer today are few. I have believed for a long time that a praying church is an effective church. On the other hand, I also believe that a person or church that only talks about prayer, yet seldom prays, is ineffective in the end. If this is true, then what can be done to turn the church around not only in its view of prayer but its practice?

(Continued on page 15)

No Peace at the Party



By Rev. Brent Carpenter

In October, 2003, my wife, Glenda, and I found ourselves in Dallas, Texas. We were there to minister at the funeral of her brother, who had died at the age of 55 in a tragic work-related accident. At that time I think that we were all in shock, and the events of those few days seemed almost surreal. None of us could completely fathom the reality of his sudden demise. In those moments life took on an extremely somber hue, and we were overpowered by the reality of life's fragility.

The funeral service was scheduled for two o'clock on Sunday afternoon. The family had risen early to go to the funeral home to spend a few hours together with the one they had lost. At about ten, my wife nudged my side and said, "I think we need to go to church." I had been feeling the same way. It was a perfectly natural thing for us. We had always found solace and strength in worship and had no reason to feel particularly different on this Sunday. In fact, if anything, the sense of need was heightened by what we were facing. Being in a strange town, we looked up churches in the phone directory and began searching through the neighborhood. We came upon several churches, some of which had already begun their services, and some that we did not recognize. We finally settled on a large, brick structure that looked fairly orthodox.

We went to church looking for peace, sanctuary and renewed hope. What we got was a party.

We went in, sat down and were soon greeted by one of the ushers who welcomed us to the church. Before long the church began filling up and music started playing. It wasn't particularly what we were used to. There were drums, guitars, saxophones and a kind of driving rhythm to the music, but it was well done and quite powerful. Then the choir entered and things really began to happen. We were told to jump to our feet and people around us began to whoop and holler as the choir began to twirl and shout to the beat of the music. Soon everyone around us was caught up in the moment; people were dancing in the aisles, kicking off their shoes and embracing one another with what I would consider wild abandon. For the second time that day my wife nudged me, but this time to say, "Get me out of here." I took her by the hand as we threaded our way through this human maelstrom, out the door of the church, across the parking lot to our vehicle, and only paused to breathe a sigh of relief as we locked the doors in the car to drive away. For the first time in my life, I had actually walked out of a church service.

Now I had something else to think about. What had just happened? I have always been an advocate of celebratory worship and thought I could handle whatever the church had to offer. But this was too much, especially on this day. There was little doubt in my mind that this was probably a good, Bible-believing body of saints, but they had failed us. We went to church looking for peace, sanctuary and renewed hope. What we got was a party. This got me to thinking about our church. We would be considered by many to be far too traditional, yet we do celebrate what God has done and is doing in our midst from Sunday to Sunday. But then, we also continue to have those quiet times as well. I found myself longing for some peaceful organ music, a time of silent prayer, a few moments to worship quietly and corporately before my God, the God of all comfort and strength. And then I began to wonder, how many times have I, in the midst of celebration, failed to offer this component of worship for those who need it? We are a generation surrounded by noise. We wake up in the morning to the sound of the alarm clock, and we drive to work to the blast of the radio. Our days are filled with talk, chatter and sound. Sometimes, we in the church have opted for society's bend in our quest to make worship exuberant, fresh and exciting. Perhaps we, too, have failed. We have been so busy entertaining ourselves, that we have not seen the hurt in our midst. We have not responded with compassion and care, but with noise. And sometimes, what we truly need is absent; quiet, peace and freedom from the world's cacophony. There are times in our lives when we must be still before God and experience his comforting hand on our shoulder. To find as Isaiah did, that in quietness and trust we find our strength. I began to pray that I will be more sensitive to the people around me; that I, as a pastor, will sense anew that what others may need is not more noise, but a peaceful calm assurance in Christ; and that we, as the church of Jesus, be diligent in providing it.

I found myself leaving Texas, with a profound sorrow still in my heart, but with a renewed resolve that our church be a cathedral of peace for the hurting, the hungry, those who are struggling and those who are in sorrow, that they might find cause to hope again in the arms of our merciful Savior. Perhaps I have no greater calling in worship than this.✞

Rev. Brent Carpenter is pastor of Dulin's Grove Advent Christian Church, Charlotte, N.C.

Six Mistakse Every Church Should Avoid

By Dr. Billy A. Melvin

Over some fifty years of ministry, I have observed that churches often make serious mistakes in how they provide for their pastor and his family. These mistakes place a tremendous strain on the pastor and may impact his ability to serve effectively or result in his early departure to another field of service.

Here are the six mistakes. Please consider each and ask yourself whether or not your church is guilty.

1

The first mistake is balancing the church budget on the back of the pastor and his family. What happens is this: Consideration is given to all budget items except the pastor's salary. Then, in light of the previous year's experience, new expense figures are established for the coming year. These are then totaled to determine whether or not there is room in the budget to give the pastor a raise or provide some benefit he should receive.

How often I've heard the statement: "We know our pastor is underpaid and we'd like to do more for him, but our budget won't allow it." When this is said, what has happened? Simple. The church budget has been balanced on the back of the pastor. He is the one who pays for the church to have a balanced budget:



The way to avoid this mistake is to consider the pastor's salary and benefits *before considering the other items in the budget.* The first goal should be to do what is fair and right for the pastor in light of his education, experience and ability, even if some other items in the budget have to be cut or eliminated (A good standard in most communities is the pay scale of school principals in the local school system).

2

The second mistake is failure to recognize the loss of personal income to a pastor if he has to pay all of his Social Security payments.

Most pastors serving churches in a full-time capacity make their Social Security payments as a self-employed person. Unless the church assists the pastor in these payments his income is significantly reduced.



Here is an example: Let's assume your pastor has an adjusted gross annual income of $30,000. His Social Security payment for the year 2000 is 15.30% of his salary or a total of $4,590. That's a hefty amount for a pastor to subtract from his annual income. True, if the church assists the pastor with his Social Security payments, he has to declare that money as income, but the cost to him is greatly reduced.

It is my conviction that every church should provide at least 50% of the pastor's Social Security payment, if not all of it.

3

The third mistake is thinking that the provision of a parsonage is a good deal for the pastor. The provision of a parsonage may be a good deal for the church, but it's hardly a good deal for the pastor. There are two reasons for this.

First, I have noted a trend among churches to over-estimate the value of the parsonage to the pastor and his family when setting his salary. The congregation often is comfortable with the notion that although they are paying a small salary, they are providing a house

with all utilities. In most cases of this sort, the value placed on the provision of a parsonage and utilities is much higher than can be justified.



And, second, what is really happening here? Isn't it obvious? The pastor and his family are making payments on a house they don't even own. In short, he is helping to buy or maintain a house for the church. It is for this reason that many older pastors, who have lived in parsonages all of their lives, have no place to go when they can no longer serve. Fortunately, more and more churches are seeing the fallacy of the parsonage arrangement and are providing loans and housing allowances, so pastors can purchase their own houses.

4

The fourth mistake is failure to provide for the pastor appropriate benefits beyond his basic salary.

The needs of most pastors and their families go beyond a basic salary. Such provisions as health insurance, vacation time or sick days should be provided by the church. And when possible, still other benefits should be considered. Many churches today provide their pastor a budget for books and magazines, time away for conferences/seminars and occasional opportunities for further education or study.



In any annual review of your pastor's salary, make sure there is also a review of the benefits provided by the church. Your generosity in this area will help meet real needs and enable your pastor to serve you even better.

5

The fifth mistake is assuming the pastor should cover any auto expense incurred in the fulfillment of his pastoral ministry.

I'll never understand it, but it happens. Business-men who receive full reimbursement for their travel expenses in connection with their jobs will sit in a finance committee meeting of a church and make no provision to reimburse the pastor for his travel expenses.

With the high cost of purchasing and operating an automobile today, the cost to a pastor is significant when he is expected to absorb the cost of miles driven in ministry. The least a church can do is to reimburse the pastor for the actual miles he drives in the fulfillment of his pastoral duties.



In the year 2004 the mileage allowance by IRS was 37.5 cents per mile. Every church should arrange for their pastor to keep a record of miles driven in ministry, so he can be reimbursed monthly.

The sixth mistake is neglecting to provide a fair investment in a pension fund for the pastor, so there is some provision for his living expenses when he is no longer able to serve.

Because a pastor seldom stays at one church for his entire ministry, churches don't see the impact this mistake has on his life and his family. Like everyone else, it is prudent for a pastor to have a pension plan to supplement what income he may be able to receive from Social Security. I trust by now the leadership of every local church understands that it is most difficult, if not impossible, to live on Social Security alone.



When a local church provides for the pastor's pension fund during the time he is serving that church, it is doing its part in providing for the pastor's retirement years. What is a fair provision? I suggest a goal of 10% of the pastor's annual salary as a minimum.

Although the above six mistakes were all I had planned to write about in this article, there is another that comes to mind. It is failure to show appropriate love and appreciation to the pastor and his family at Christmas time and other special occasions such as his birthday or the anniversary date of his ministry at the church. Pastors, like all of us, appreciate expressions of love. At such times, it isn't the dollar amount of a gift that counts, but the fact that the church cares enough to say we love and appreciate our pastor.



How does your church measure up? Are you appropriately providing for your pastor and his family or still making the mistakes every church should avoid?✞

Billy A. Melvin has served as a pastor, denominational leader and was for 28 years the Executive Director of the National Association of Evangelicals. He is co-founder of the Christian Association of Prime Timers, an organization serving Christian seniors. Dr. Melvin lives with his wife, Darlene, in Englewood, Florida, where he is involved in a variety of Christian ministries.

WHAT ABOUT ADVENT?



By Dr. Ed Fudge

Someone asks what Advent means in the Christian calendar, where it is found in the Bible, and whether Christians ought to observe it.

Within 300-400 years after Christ, many Christians set aside an Advent season as a time for fasting, reflection and penitence to prepare for Epiphany, a day celebrating Christ's "epiphany" or appearance to the Wise Men (in the Western church) or his baptism (in the Eastern church). With the evolution of Christmas as a special day on December 25, the focus of Advent gradually moved from Epiphany to the "coming" *(adventus* in Latin) of Christ at his birth.

Advent later came to symbolize anticipation for Christ's second coming also, and the Western church dropped fasting during Advent. The season of Advent, which Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants begin on the Sunday nearest November 30, includes four Sundays and ends on Christmas Eve. (Eastern Orthodox have a longer, more solemn Advent season.) Many churches and homes now mark this season with wreaths, candles, special colors and religious calendars. It is a time for anticipating Christmas as the celebration of Jesus' birth, for anticipating his coming anew into our own hearts, and for anticipating his coming again in person and in power at the End.

The word "Advent" does not appear in the English Bible, but the idea behind that word—the "coming" of the Messiah—runs through both Old and New Testaments. Luke tells of Simeon and Anna who eagerly awaited the coming of the Messiah, and who joyfully recognized him in the infant Jesus (Luke 2:25-38). The apostle Paul describes Christians as people who now eagerly await Christ's second coming (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 4:8). Since neither Jesus nor his apostles specifically commanded Advent (or Christmas or Easter), Christians cannot be faulted who choose not to observe these religious holidays. But neither is there any harm in using these special occasions to remember and to celebrate the important events which are certainly at the heart of our Christian faith (Rom. 14:5-6). ✞

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(Warren Continued)

Recently, in an attempt to address this need, our church established a prayer room. To me, this was simply an act of obedience in light of Jesus' proclamation that the church first and foremost would be a "house of prayer" (Mt. 21:13). Churches are known for many things but few are known for prayer. We believe that a prayer room can become a strategic way for a church to focus the prayer lives of their members toward the relevant needs of the ministry and beyond. The steps taken by a church in developing a prayer room will vary from place to place, but we have discovered a few ingredients that must not be overlooked.

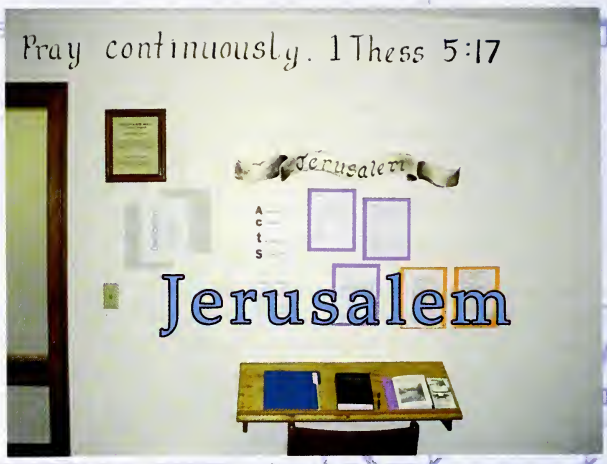
First, the appearance of your prayer room will go a long way in setting the atmosphere and climate for prayer. Softer colors and peaceful surroundings will always be a plus. In addition, pictures that set the scene are very important. The development of our prayer room became a team effort when we asked one of the ladies in our church with tremendous artistic abilities to paint a picture in the room that would create a spirit of worship. The end product was a garden and sunset scene with Jesus praying. Anyone entering the room is immediately ushered into the spirit of the room by the tone that has been set.

Next, we wanted to help our people with the process of praying through our needs. Once again, we returned to the Bible for a model. After careful consideration, it seemed clear to us that Jesus not only gave us his plan for advancing the gospel throughout the world (Mt. 28:19-20) but that he also gave us a plan of action to guide our prayers. We are not only to take the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, but we are also better able to succeed at carrying out the Great and Everyday Commission if we direct our prayers along a similar path. Therefore, it seemed wise to arrange our prayer room along these lines. As one enters the room he will quickly notice it is divided into four major stations: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Each station is anchored by a beautiful yet simple shelf (also made by one of our members) that becomes the launching place of our prayers concerning Jerusalem (local church needs), Judea (Jacksonville and greater metropolitan area), Samaria (FL Conference) and the ends of the earth (USA, World Missions). In the corner one will find a chair strategically located by the "pray for the world map." A person can sit in this chair and select anyplace in the world for which to pray. From the chair a person can be reminded of why they are there in the first place as they read the calligraphied Scripture that circles the entire room. This, accompanied by the soft tunes of praise and worship music filling the air, enables a person to truly be blessed and motivated to become a person that practices the habit of purposeful prayer.

Many folks in the church have been a part of this project, making it both doable and rewarding. In the end, we have established a place where much can happen and where ministries begin. People can let go of their worries in a room like this. They can gain strength for whatever faces them outside the room. Some can simply get away from the hustle and bustle of the busy world outside and spend time with their Lord. In a way, a prayer room provides a view that is often lacking in the church and in the life of the believer. A room like this creates a real possibility for God to speak to his people. A room like this makes a powerful statement to the Lord concerning our need for him. In a room like this the admonitions from the Scriptures to become men and women of prayer can become true.

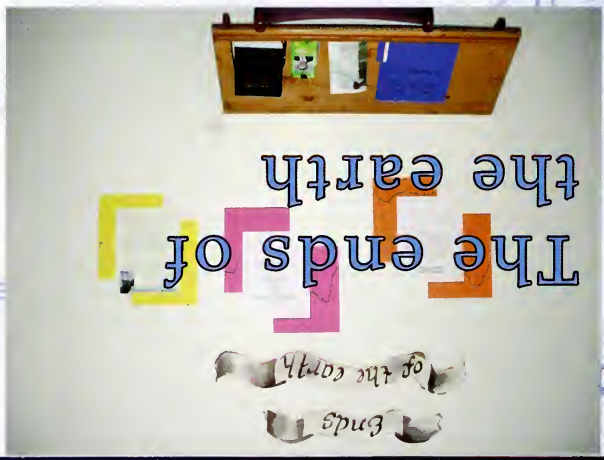
So what's keeping you? Isn't there a place in your church that you could turn into a sanctified place of prayer? Why not start right now and begin to make prayer more of a focus in your life and in the life of your church? It's not so hard to do, and the reward for this kind of investment is amazing. You won't be disappointed when you begin to see God work in the lives of your people because they have entered the room with a view—God's view! Go ahead and just do it. Create your own prayer room and see what God will do when his people become more committed and involved in praying.✞

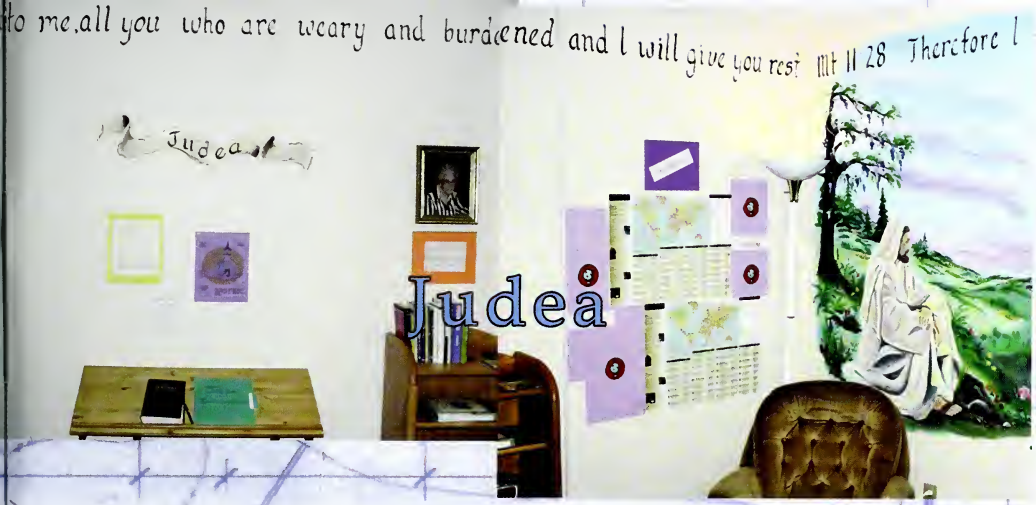
Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren II is pastor of the West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church, Jacksonville, Fla., and serves as recording secretary of the executive council of Advent Christian General Conference.



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A New Season



By Rev. Tim Fox

Life has about it various cycles, stages, and seasons. That is so throughout the fabric of our living, whether it is with our families, with our careers, or with our churches. There is a flow associated with our living that is unavoidable.

In the summer of '03, Ruth and I were honored to participate in the wedding of our oldest son, Jeremy, and his lovely bride, Cara. As I was standing before the couple at the altar, speaking to them of God's plan from eternity past, I was struck anew with the fact that life has its seasons. Jeremy and Cara were entering a new season . . . and so were Ruth and I. We were doing so with joy and bright hope for the future.

There is no escaping the cycles of life, but there certainly is a wide variance in people's responses to the coming of a new season. Some are so enamored with the past that it is their mission in life to preserve it at any cost. Others deal with the changes that life brings by trying to ignore them, with the hope that they will just go away. And there are those who embrace the new season, breathe in its fresh air, and see it as an opportunity for the serendipity of the Holy Spirit; God doing a new thing that flows out of the old.

I think of Rebekah, Isaac's wife. Remember the story of how Abraham was becoming concerned that his son Isaac had not yet married. He called his servant to his side and made him promise that he would seek out a wife for his son from among their own people. The servant then prayed and devised a test to help him discern what God was doing. Rebekah wonderfully met that test—a very remarkable set of circumstances. Then, the servant, anxious to get back home, asked Rebekah's uncle Laban for permission to take her with him back to Isaac.

Do you remember Laban's response? "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go" (Gen. 24:55). Laban was struggling to enter fully into the "God-thing" that was happening right before his very eyes. He could sense that God was in recent events, but there was part of him that wanted to hang on to Rebekah for a few more undetermined days. He wasn't quite ready to embrace the new season.

More than Laban's hesitancy, though, I marvel at Rebekah's willingness. Rather than get into an argument with the servant, Laban said, "Let's call the girl and ask her about it." And Genesis 24:58 records her faith-filled response: "I will go," she said.

Three short words that are so important for God's people. Think about what they must have meant to this very young girl. A man comes out of the wilderness making certain claims. It seemed that it might be of God, but Rebekah did not know that man from Adam. And yet, she must have also sensed that God was afoot. God was doing a new thing. A new season in her life was about to blow in. Already, she was starting to breathe the air of it, smell the sweetness of it, feel the refreshment from it. With trust and hope she was ready to fully embrace it. The rest is history.

"I will go," she said.

For all of us, I believe that can be our only healthy response to the serendipity of the Holy Spirit. "Lord, I'm not sure I understand all the details and logistics. My common sense is a bit uneasy. But in my spirit I sense that you are afoot and I will go. I will embrace the new season. I will breathe deeply of its air, and let myself be refreshed by its life. I will go. With you, Lord, I will go."✞

Rev. Tim Fox is pastor of Church of New Hope (AC), Lewiston, Idaho, and serves on the executive council of Advent Christian General Conference.

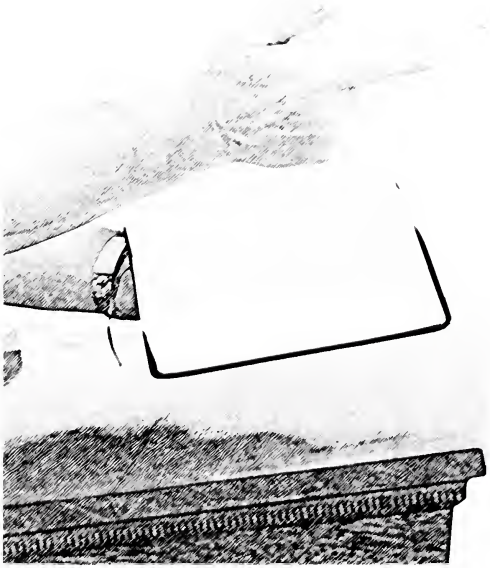
(Ross cont.)



The Evangelist

When Dad finally returned, ducking his head under the rafters as he ascended the narrow stairs to the loft, I asked, "Was he ever able to get saved, Dad? That man who didn't think he was good enough?" He replied, as he wearily laid his suit coat on the bed and sat down, "Oh, he could be saved if he wants to be, son. But, he still is pretty much stuck on himself. Whenever he realizes that Jesus' sacrifice is bigger than any man's sin, he can be saved." As I pondered that thought, Dad spoke the words I'd been waiting all evening to hear, "Let's you and me go get some ice cream!"

Times like these shaped my life more than I ever realized at the time. The many occasions such as this one, times that Dad spent individually sharing his life and ministry experiences with each of his four boys, are a big part of the reason we all love and serve the Lord today. It was more than the fact that he was an evangelist. It was also that he freely and intentionally shared his passion for that calling and for his Lord with us.



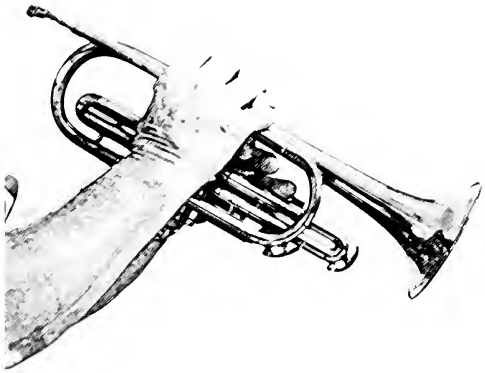
Years later, when our denomination began to probe seriously what it means to obey Christ's Great Commission to be making disciples as a way of life, I came to better understand the tremendous impact of such practical, personal learning experiences. This I have come to believe: "Real learning which impacts real living is a product of real relationships." While my dad has been the most important such relationship in my life, there have been others, too.

The Musician



Some called him "the day-old donut man." Baden Frewin worked for many years at Harris Bakery, and he hauled off cartons and cartons of unmarketable product (known in those days by the politically insensitive label of "cripples") to share with family and friends. How wonderful that his family and ours were dear friends! In fact, we always had known him as "Uncle Baden." And when he regularly stopped by the house, opened the trunk of his car and invited us to help ourselves to the cartons of cripples, he easily became our favorite "uncle!"

But Uncle Baden helped to make me the man I am today in much more than a physical way (i.e.- due to years of consuming a nearly unlimited supply of free donuts). He also discipled us boys relationally, due to his love for the Lord and his passion for the ministry of music. Often he would accompany my dad to evangelistic meetings as song leader and soloist. But he also was involved in countless music ministry opportunities all over the central Maine area where we lived. And it was his policy always to try to take along some of us "young fellas" and encourage us to use whatever talent the Lord had given.



With Uncle Baden, we sang and played our instruments at county fairs, the Fairfield Sanitarium Easter Sunrise Service, and at churches and camp meetings in more towns and denominations than I can ever count. It was truly on-the-job training, and sometimes the job we did musically was rather pathetic. Uncle Bade's unflagging, enthusiastic encouragement meant a lot. But, his example meant even more. I have never known a man who could express his love for the Lord through vocal music with greater force. His rich, powerful bass voice could command your attention, but his exuberant love for Jesus called for your commitment! We loved just being with the man! It may have been the closest some of us ever have gotten to being with Jesus. Such is the powerful communication of intentional and relational ministry.

A few years later I went off to Bible college, feeling that the Lord was directing me to professionally prepare for some type of career ministry. At Berkshire Christian College I was impacted by many godly Christian leaders in the classroom. But perhaps the most profound impact from those years of formal instruction came not in the classroom, but in the relational training, which was called "internship." For several weeks of my senior year, I was mentored by Rev. Cameron Ainsworth, who pastored the Emmanuel Advent Christian Church of Rochester, New Hampshire. Certainly that practical component of my education was designed to be both intentional and "hands on." But it was also intensely relational, to the extent that I not only shadowed the pastor day after day, but also lived in the parsonage with his family the entire time. Actually they led me to believe that I was truly a part of their family. So my experience of what it means to be a pastor did not stop at the office, the church, or the hospital. It continued on home to the parsonage each evening.



THE MINISTER

Since I was an adopted member of the Ainsworth clan, it would be a breach of ethics to reveal the bizarre things that regularly occurred behind those parsonage doors (although such disclosures would certainly add considerable entertainment value to this article!) Even your imagination probably would not do it justice! Most importantly, during those days I learned that Cameron Ainsworth is a man who deeply loves the Word of God, genuinely and warmly loves people, and dearly loves to have a good time, no matter what he may be doing! In all of these characteristics his example created within me a strong desire to have a passion such as his.



My early life and ministry was shaped profoundly by these three men. The effectiveness not only was due to the power of example, but also to the incredible force of intentional and intimate learning relationships. My highest calling has become to invest in the next generation of disciples with the same practical, intentional camaraderie. What better way to communicate the Word Who became flesh and lived among us? (John 1:14) ✞

Programs offered by the Office of Women's Ministries of the Advent Christian denomination:

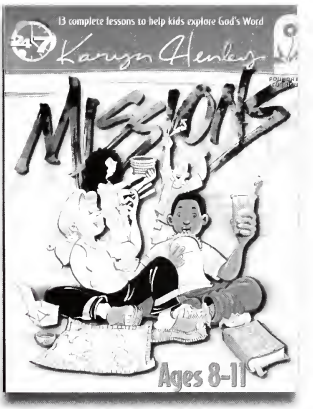
For Youth

"Made for a Mission" a series of programs put together by a team of AC writers on the lives of great heroes of the faith. The book explores some basic questions such as, "What am I here for?" and "What is my purpose?" The aim is to challenge your young people to find their purpose in life. The WHFMS sponsors this work, and it is the Young Women's Auxiliary's official program material for 2005. Price $6.00.



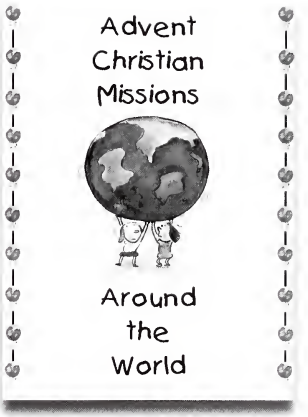
For King's Jewels and Junior Action Groups

"Missions" by Karyn Henley (Standard Publishing), contains 13 complete lessons all about missions. While the material is written for ages 8-11, it can be easily adapted for use with your younger King's Jewels-age children. The aim is for you and your children to have a great adventure together as you learn more about "Missions." Recommended by Randee Davis. Price $6.00.



Supplement to KJ/JA program 2005

"Advent Christian Missions Around the World" is an up-to-date missions supplement that includes pictures and information about Advent Christian Missionaries and their fields of service, along with Bible verses for your children to study and memorize. This booklet, compiled by Randee Davis, has been prepared by the WHFMS Office of Women's Ministries and is available to accompany the book, *Missions,* by Karen Henley. Price $2.50.



Please order from:
Office of Women's Ministries
PO Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227

Telephone: Mary Ritchie at 1-800-676-0694 Ext: 221, or
Email: MaryRitchie@adventchristian.org

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

I can still hear the words echo in my mind. "Maybe it's time to close the doors." Another church had reached a point in her history where the past was definitely brighter than the present and the future looked more than dim. Should they close the doors forever?

That scenario has been replayed many times over. Throughout our denomination, churches even now may be considering the same question. Internal problems that refuse to be resolved or matters of morality among church leadership threaten congregations from within. Outside forces such as nearby mega-churches and the overall tenor of a post-modern society only adds to the dilemma. Dr. Clyde Hewitt writes passionately about this problem in his book, *Devotion and Development.* "How grevious it is to see a much loved church slowly die before your eyes. And how often has it happened to dedicated Advent Christians."

Why do many of our churches remain small in attendance while others teeter on the brink of closure? Hewitt addresses some of the contributing causes to the "downfall" of some Advent Christian churches and the failure of this denomination "to be more expansive." Let me focus on one of Hewitt's reasons that I believe still plagues us today: "an acceptance of and a resignation to [our] smallness."

The problem with smallness is that it tends to breed smallness, both in mindset and in action. How many times have you observed a visitor entering a church for the first time only to be told they were sitting in "someone's seat"? I have seen this happen in each of the churches I have served! Too many of our churches are at a "comfortable level" and are easily threatened by the arrival of "new people." Hewitt's summarization of this mindset is a powerful antidote. "We are small in outlook, in dreams, in visions."

It's time to change our thinking. The message we proclaim demands a louder voice! The darkness of this world needs brighter light! As Robert Dale writes in *To Dream Again,* "Small expectations yield meager results. Unhealthy visions produce sick congregations."

Paul's prayer for the saints in Ephesus ends with a powerful benediction: "Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21 NKJV)

God grant that Advent Christian people will seek God to do *more* than we ask or think, that there might be glory in His church!✞

(Editorial continued)
leak sometime in the future. He's right. It will leak… in, say, ten or fifteen years! Unfortunately, the fact that it isn't leaking right now doesn't get me off his hook. So I need to have a roofer examine the shingles to determine that they are nine years old and will probably have to be replaced… some day. Other things I have to fix include a kitchen sink sprayer (which we've never used and wasn't broken until he "inspected" it), and a bathtub spout that doesn't leak but needs to be sealed anyway. I also need to have a structural engineer examine the construction to make sure an outer wall won't collapse—even though county engineers inspected the structure numerous times during construction.

Then there's the house we're buying. I have to pay another inspector to examine it and tell me things I already know. The house had termites—I know. The roof is old—I know. The place is filthy—I know. I'm hoping he'll also tell me some things I *don't* know, such as whether the termites have been permanently banished from the building, and whether the old heating system might be a potential weapon of mass destruction.

If both inspections can be negotiated and no one gets cold feet, arrested, or hit by a meteor, we'll spend four days packing, moving, signing, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, moving, and collapsing. Adding this to the prior two weeks of last minute necessary "home improvements" leads one to the logical question, "Why in the world would anyone subject himself to such an ordeal?" The simple answer is, "to be in a better place."

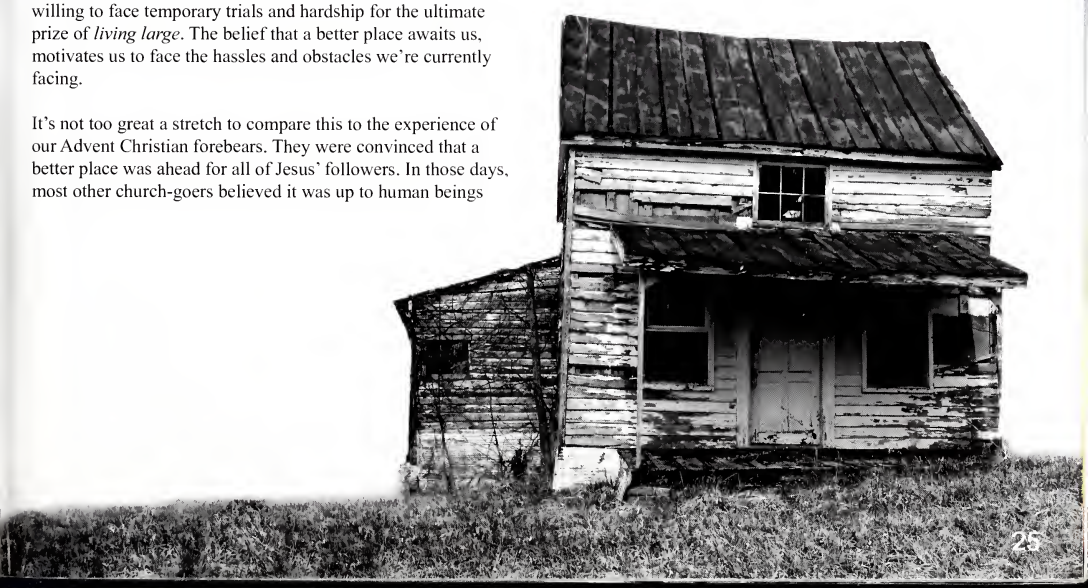
I know "a better place" is a purely subjective idea, and many may think I'm crazy to call a termite-ravaged bacteria farm an improvement over my nice new ranch-style house. But I've managed to convince Kathy we're "movin' on up," so we're willing to face temporary trials and hardship for the ultimate prize of *living large*. The belief that a better place awaits us, motivates us to face the hassles and obstacles we're currently facing.

It's not too great a stretch to compare this to the experience of our Advent Christian forebears. They were convinced that a better place was ahead for all of Jesus' followers. In those days, most other church-goers believed it was up to human beings to create that "better place," and that only after the world was more or less "Christianized" would Christ return. William Miller and his Adventist followers were considered heretics for preaching that Jesus' return was not dependent on man's efforts, and that his coming could happen immediately.

The hopeful prospect of an imminent Kingdom of God led early Advent Christians to face far worse difficulties than any housing inspector could provide. Many lost homes, jobs, reputations and, in some instances, even their families. But they identified with the Apostle Paul's strong conviction: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Recently I've discovered a truth that many of our third-world brothers and sisters hold as the bedrock of their hope: that present sufferings cause me to long for Christ's return and the Eternal Kingdom. Today's trials lead me to look for a better place—a place no moth or rust (or termite) can damage. There's nothing like poor health, or unpaid bills, or unfair treatment, or uncertain national politics to help my faith "look up."

As I suffer with the red tape of inspectors, realtors, lawyers, and lenders, I console myself with the hope of moving to a better house. Even more, as I suffer in a world plagued with AIDS, terrorism, hunger, poverty, crime, cancer, hurricanes, and all of Satan's lies, I find comfort by reminding myself that I'm bound for a better place, ruled by the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose return could happen even today.✞



Cryptogram: Find the real letters these letters represent. Once a letter is decoded, it remains the same throughout the list. Look for recurring combinations of letters or repeated letters. (Hint: G = L)

GPQ TV QAPD LFFSELMA QAP QASEDP EO BSLMP XKQA MEDOKUPDMP, VE

QALQ XP RLZ SPMPKHP RPSMZ LDU OKDU BSLMP QE APGF TV KD ETS

QKRP EO DPPU. Hebrews 4:16

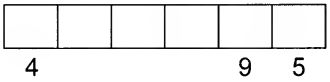


ONE STEP BEFORE: Change each letter to the letter that comes before it in the alphabet.

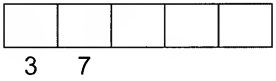
EPO'U MFU BOZPOF MPPL EPXO PO ZPV CFDBVTF ZPV BSF ZPVOH, CVU TFU BO FYBNQMF GPS UIF CFMJFWFST JO TQFFDI, JO MJGF, JO MPWF, JO GBJUI BOE JO QVSJUZ. (I TIM. 4:12)



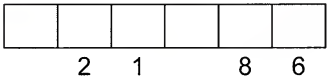
Unscramble **each of the clue words; then copy the letters in the numbered boxes to other boxes with the same number.**



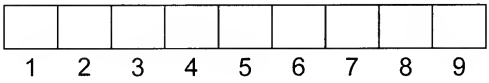
EHTOSN



LODYG



EVRTUI





As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

A=1	L=10
B=2	N=11
C=3	O=12
D=4	R=13
E=5	S=14
F=6	T=15
G=7	U=16
H=8	V=17
I=9	W=18

BREAK THE CODE

8 12 18 7 13 5 1 15 9 14 15 8 5 10 12 17 5 15 8 5 6 1 15 8 5 13

8 1 14 10 1 17 9 14 8 5 4 12 11 16 14 15 8 1 15 18 5 14 8 12 16 10 4

2 5 3 1 10 10 5 4 3 8 9 10 4 13 5 11 12 6 7 12 4 ! 1 John 3 16



Find which one does not belong in each group

1. a) love b) faith c) fear d) hope
2. a) Shadrach b) Adam c) Meshach d) Abednego
3. a) feet b) heart c) mind d) soul
4. a) Abraham b) Isaac c) Jacob d) Paul

Diagnosis: CANCER

An interview with Sylvia Morgan Baker, Author



For the past eleven years Sylvia Baker has co-labored with her husband, Dan, at a private school in Baltimore, Maryland, where she serves as elementary principal and dean of curriculum development. She has a master's degree in Education Administration and has been honored by the Congressional Youth Leadership Council for her guidance and leadership among today's youth. Since recovering from breast cancer, she fights this dreaded disease through the American Cancer Society fund-raising projects, Reach to Recover, and Tell A Friend programs.

ACW: Most of our readers won't recognize the name of Sylvia Baker. Tell us who you are and how you came in contact with us.

Sylvia: I grew up in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, living mostly in the Ossipee and Freedom region. As a young girl in the second grade, we attended the Advent Christian Church in West Ossipee, NH. Rev. Jim Fitzsimmons was the pastor in those days, and I enjoyed his animated and fiery messages very much! His favorite song was "There's Going to be a Meeting in the Air," which was reserved for the Sunday evening special! One Sunday evening we arrived early for church. No one was there; I believe my father had dropped us off in order to go and pick up some folks whose car had broken down. My mother still tells the story of me getting up on the pulpit area and preaching away! I ended my sermon with the Sunday evening special song and plenty of exhortation from my mother to get off the pulpit!

> Blessed are those who focus on solutions and provisions, when they have more problems than most. *Be* thankful you have the chance to heal.

ACW: We're very excited about your new book, *Breast Cancer Be-Attitudes*! Was the book written as the result of research you did, or did it arise from your own experiences?

Sylvia: I was diagnosed with breast cancer three years ago, at the age of 45. As everyone feels, I thought I was either too young or too Christian to get this dreaded disease. After the initial shock began to wane, I realized the need to take quick action as cancer waits for no one. It was a full two years from diagnosis to completing treatment and throughout this entire time God was carrying me. I began to realize the vital importance of choosing my thoughts to exercise faith in God's character of goodness and His promises for faithfulness.

ACW: What led you to decide to write the book?

Sylvia: Throughout my numerous visits to cancer treatment centers I met many women who wore fear on their faces. Their faces hid any reason for hope, and despair was deeply marked in their furrowed brows. The shadow of death was all around me yet, as I laughed or shared stories with these women, the darkness seemed to dispel. I realized hope begins in the heart, and with the right thoughts, that hope can be re-kindled.

ACW: Tell us how you got the book from the "idea" stage to the "in-print" stage.

Sylvia: I started to write in the summer of 2003, out in western Maryland at Deep Creek Lake. I struggle to articulate with honesty the emotion and fear that "diagnosis: cancer" brings in, while at the same time imparting the secret of God's thoughts to the reader. I began to send out proposals to numerous publishers when the book was only half finished. Silas Publishing picked up the book right away. The president of Silas was formerly a Christian psychologist and I believe he recognized the value of the book's message.

> Blessed are those who mourn; for they shall be comforted. Indeed. *Be* reassured that joy comes in the morning.

ACW: What are some of the topics covered in the book?

Sylvia: The book is a compelling narrative, with chapter titles such as: The Haunted House (a plastic surgeon's office!), Mastectomies - Double-Take, Toughing it Out: Fight or Flight? The title is named for the Blessed Breast Cancer Be-Attitudes that were a part of my initial writing. I'll share one with you here: "Blessed are those who focus on solutions and provisions, when they have more problems than most. Be thankful you have the chance to heal."

Three well-known doctors have made contributions in the book to cover the three most common forms of treatment: chemotherapy, radiation therapy and Tamoxifen. The book also contains my own recipes that enabled me to eat my way through chemotherapy—healthily, I might add. My two children have written short pieces on humor therapy and the importance of detoxification after chemotherapy. Other topics include: Tips for helping your friend or loved one going through treatment, cancer resources and suggested reading for more information.

ACW: What do you hope the book will contribute to those who read it?

Sylvia: I hope this book will encourage women to treat their cancer right away. I hope it lets them know that they are not alone and that when we turn our thoughts towards God, he will always lift us up. The book will also be meaningful as a resource for practical information.

ACW: Do you plan to write another book someday?

Sylvia: Yes! I want to write about God's thoughts toward your Attention Deficit Disorder child/student. My husband and I plan to write a book together specifically for husbands whose wives are in treatment for cancer.✞

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiates 3:1-8, KJV Amplified

Move Over, Rosa Parks!

By Ms. Randee Davis



We all know Rosa Parks as the heroine of the Civil Rights Era. On December 1, 1955, after a long day's work, Rosa got on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She was tired of always sitting in the back of the bus, so on this particular day Rosa decided to sit right down at the front of the bus. What a stir she caused! What a revolution! Rosa became known as the woman who changed a nation.

Many of us are old enough to remember those days when some folks sat at the back of the bus, drank from separate water fountains, used separate facilities, and attended separate schools. It all seems like a dream now, a really preposterous dream! To think that in America, the land of the free, we treated each other this way. How could this have happened?

It's funny but recently I've come to understand more about how Rosa felt at the back of that bus. Have you ever wondered why the WH&FMS or the "Women's Pages" are always in the back of the Witness? I've been told that the main reason is that some folks actually stop reading when they see the WH&FMS logo. Now this is very peculiar to me since all of us Christian writers have the same purpose—to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ!

When will we be ready, like Rosa, to move to the front of the bus? We have all been covered by the shed blood of our Lord. Galatians 3:26-28 tells us, *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither bond*



nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." One day we will even overcome gender barriers that keep us at the back of the bus.

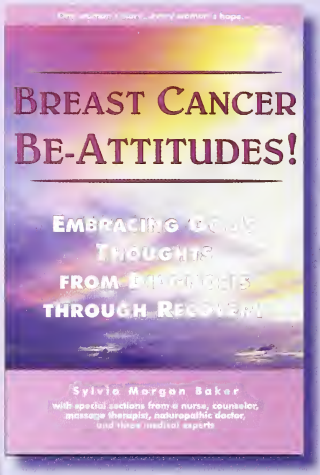
There are actually several good things about being at the back of the magazine! You ladies always know where to find our articles. You can always start at the back, it's like having dessert first. Sometimes they really do save the best 'til last. And we all know it's true that in the end the first shall be last and the last shall be first. It's too bad so many people never make it to the back. They don't even know what they're missing.

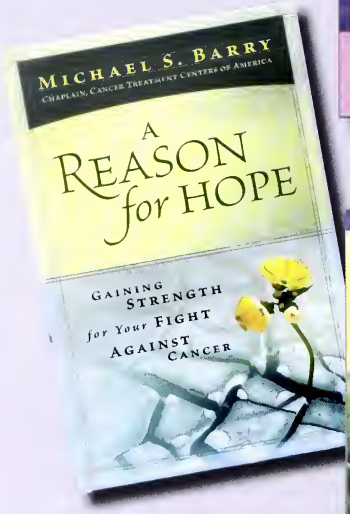
We might just be a little tempted to say, "Move over, Rosa, we're getting a little tired too!" But the real truth of the matter is that we're happy and glad to be used anywhere the Lord puts us! We're delighted and thrilled to be right here at the back of the magazine and thankful for the opportunity! I'm just sorry so many people won't get back here to read what we have to say!✞

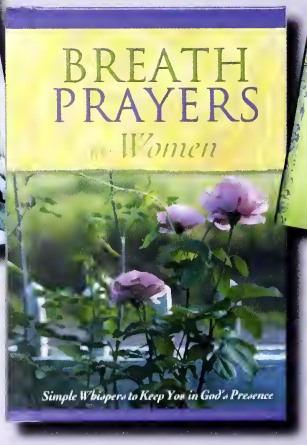


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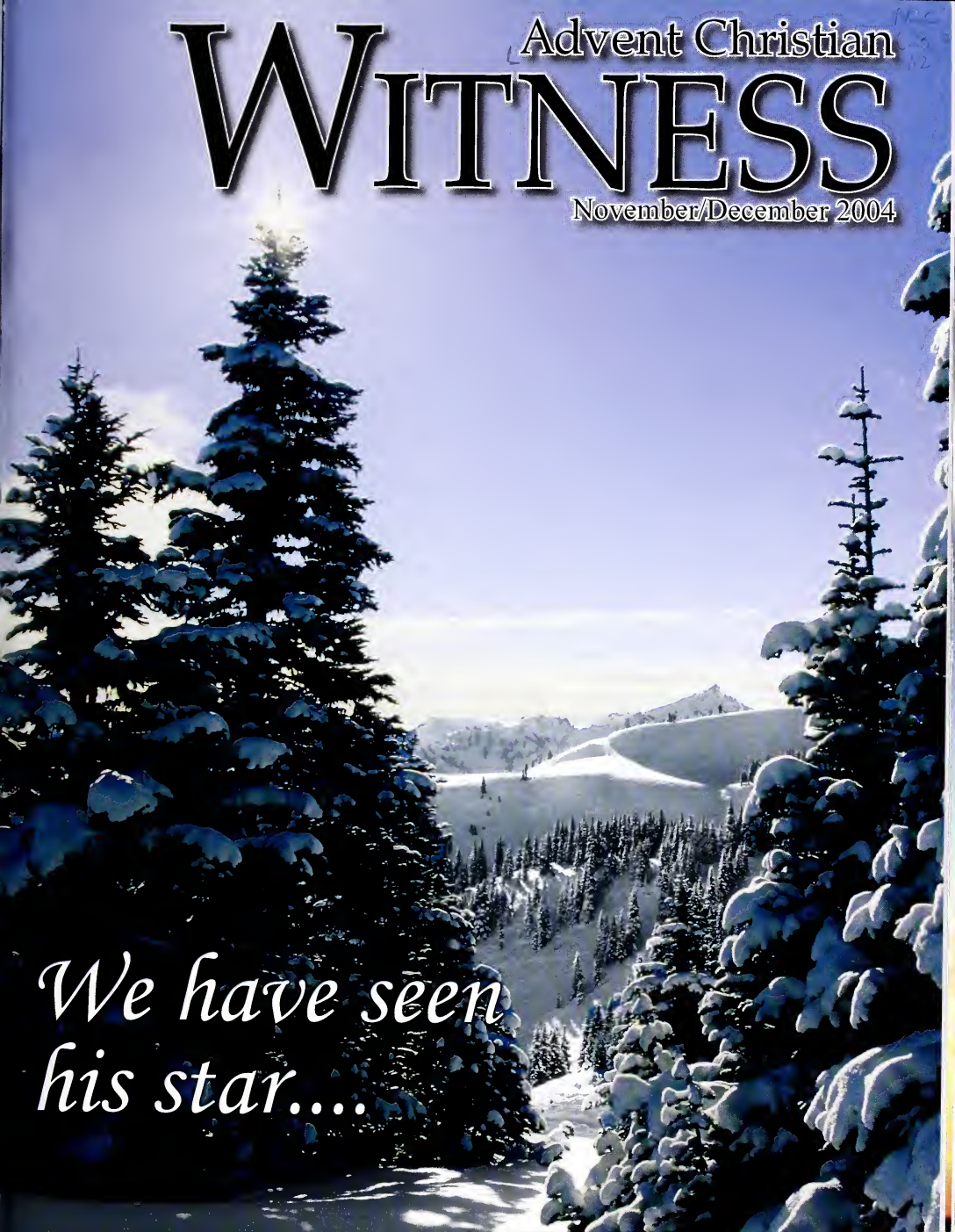


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From the Editor



Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.
(Psalm 136:1 ESV)

Allow me to testify to the goodness of God in my life during 2004. This year I…

Beat a 75% chance of instant death after tearing my carotid artery—God is good!
Celebrated twenty years of wedded bliss to my perfect soul mate—God is good!
Watched my exceptional children increase in knowledge and health—God is good!
Was given a great SUV, completely free, by some of my best friends—God is good!
Visited family in Maine and New York and had great weather—God is good!
Found a BMW for commuting to work—God is good!
Nearly completed my masters program at UNC Charlotte—God is good!
Moved into a house that exceeds every wish I had for a home—God is good!
Saw the liberal elites upset by the national elections—God is good!
Watched the Red Sox win the World Series—God is good!

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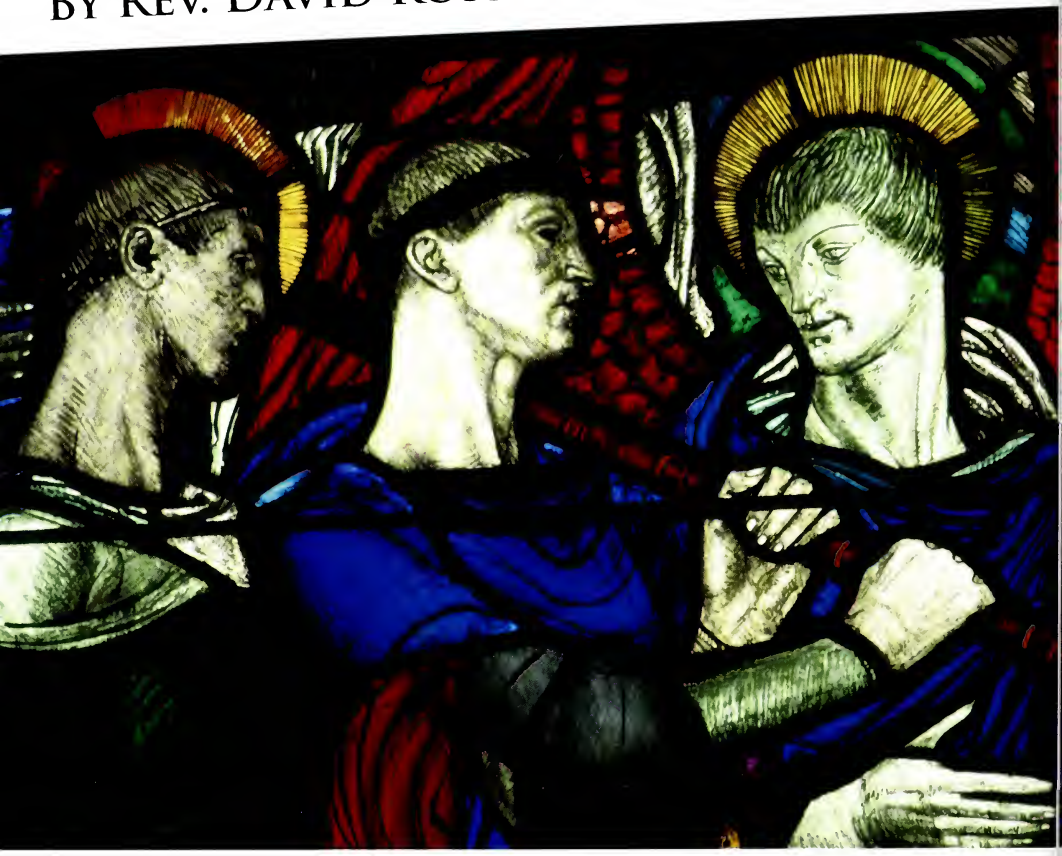
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WHAT IS DISCIPLEMAKING? PART 2

BY REV. DAVID ROSS



The Most Important Things I've Learned About Disciplemaking… So Far

Several months ago one of our pastors, Rev. David W. Davis, wrote to ask the following question:



Rev. David W. Davis

"We have heard a lot about disciplemaking over the past few years, but I would like someone to tell me exactly what it means to make disciples. Would you please publish a good explanation of what is involved in making disciples?"

To answer this question we asked one of Advent Christian General Conference's leading proponents of disciplemaking, former executive director Rev. David Ross, to share his views and experiences on the subject. The following is part one of a three-part series answering the question:

What is disciplemaking?

It has been eighteen years now since I was first seriously challenged to become intentional in fulfilling Christ's Great Commission. At that time someone (a friend) got in my face and asked, "So what are you doing to make disciples, and how effective is your strategy?" Of course, my immediate response was defensive, as every Christian's (and especially a Christian clergyman's) is likely to be: "Well, everything I do contributes toward making disciples ... sort of."

Hey, I know a lame response when I hear one, especially when it comes from my own lips. So I was humbled to recognize that if specifically obeying the Great Commission was not my clear focus, then likely it could not be described as my true passion. As Robert Raines has written concerning pastoral ministry, "The clergyman's abiding frustration is that in doing the many things that are useful, he may be prevented from doing the one thing needful" (Robert Raines, *New Life in The Church* [New York, Harper and Row, 1961], 17). Making disciples, in Jesus' opinion, is needful. Therefore, I determined to make it my priority.

Along the way, I've discovered that not all methods of teaching or preaching necessarily result in disciplemaking. The few most essential characteristics I've discovered happen to form the acrostic "PROS." That observation may have absolutely no theological significance, but at this stage of my life anything that will help me remember the four points I want to mention is a good thing! So here is what I've learned...

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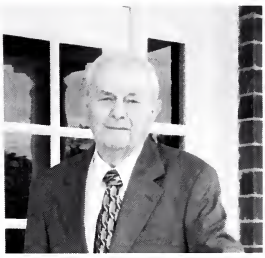


Back to Bethlehem

An imaginary trip to Christ's birthplace with Dr. Luke

By Dr. Nelson B. Melvin

The most amazing fact is the God of the universe, the God of the ages, should visit this earth.....and some will only wonder.



Dr. Melvin was ordained as an Advent Christian minister in 1944, and is a former editor of the Advent Christian Witness magazine. He is visitation pastor and minister with senior adults at Blair Road United Methodist Church in Mint Hill, North Carolina, and also serves as Pastoral Care Coordinator for Lowe Funeral Home in Charlotte, N.C.

This is the season of the year when we turn appropriately in our Bibles to the account of the manger birth of Jesus of Nazareth as it is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, former tax collector, and of Luke, the physician. The pageantry of the nativity scene—including the star, the shepherds and the wise men—warms our heart annually.

Let us think briefly about some of the people who lived in or near Bethlehem and their reactions to the birth of Jesus. In Luke's narrative there are five verses that are frequently omitted when the Scriptures are read. It is not that we do not believe them, but rather that they are not essential to the telling of the story of the coming of the Christ Child.

These words intrigue me. Listen to them:

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth" (Luke 1:1-5).

Knowing that Luke was a careful historian as well as a Greek physician, that he was a companion of St. Paul and had not met Jesus in the flesh, I have wondered how he could write to Theophilus that he had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Is it not possible that he talked with Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited the mountain village of Bethlehem and interviewed some of its inhabitants?

I do not know that this is so, but in imagination I should like to invite you to join me as we talk to some of these people—the inn keeper, the shepherds, an unknown villager, Mary and others. We may find in speaking to them about that first Christmas that they may speak to us about Christmas in our time.

The probability of Dr. Luke's careful examination before writing his beautiful narrative of the birth of Jesus suggests that those who have questions and doubts be invited to search for truth. God never demands blind faith. In the words of Isaiah the prophet, we read his invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together." The Apostle Paul exhorts his friends to prove the doctrine, and John, in his first letter, admonishes others to try the Spirits.

May I invite you to read again the Gospel of Luke and to consider Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in your search for truth?

What person would we possibly want to visit first other than Mary? Perhaps our interview with the mother of Jesus would begin something like this:

"Mary, we are wondering what experience related to the birth of Jesus was most impressive. We wish there was time to tell us how you felt when you discovered that you, a virgin, were to give birth to the Son of God, how you felt on the weary and uncomfortable trip to Bethlehem, and what you experienced when the shepherds came, and later, the wise men. There isn't time for all that we would like to hear. So can you tell us what you believe to be the most important impression, together with whatever lesson it may have for us?"

After much thought, I believe Mary's answer would be something like this:



"I have thought much about this as you may imagine, kept all these things and pondered them in my heart. To me the most amazing fact is that the God of the universe and the God of the ages should visit this earth, that he should come to us in the form of a man and that he chose me. This is a staggering truth, when you think about it; that the Sovereign of the universe should enter the earth in a stable, and that God's only begotten Son should be born of a poor humble maiden.

"I do not know why God chose me instead of any of the others he might have selected to be his handmaid. I loved him, was a virgin and was obedient; but so were many others in those days. While I do not know just why he chose me, I believe I do know why he chose someone who was humble and poor, and who had nothing to give God but herself.

"I am convinced that God was saying to all generations through the manger birth, that he willed to come to every man, no matter what condition he might find himself in. This is the real story of Christmas; and this is the tremendous truth of the incarnation, that no matter where a man is, no matter what he has done, and regardless of his condition, God comes to him right where he is.

"It is at this point that Christianity is unique. All other religions are ladders by which men seek to rise toward a righteous God. Christianity, through the Christmas story, tells us of a Holy God who comes down to sinful men to transform their lives and to make them new creatures—to make them His own sons and daughters."

My Lord has garments so wondrous fine, And myrrh their texture fills;
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine, With joy my being thrills.

His life had also its sorrows sore, For aloes had a part;
And when I think of the Cross he bore, My eyes with tear drops start.

His garments too were in cassia dipped, With healing in a touch;
Each time my feet in some sin have slipped, He took me from its clutch.

In garments glorious he will come, To open wide the door;
And I shall enter my heavenly home To dwell forevermore.

Out of the ivory palaces Into a world of woe,
Only his great eternal love Made my Savior go.

We have just talked with Mary, as Luke must have done to have written so tenderly about her mother role. Ideally we would next speak with Joseph, Mary's husband. Yet tradition indicates that Joseph died before it could have been possible for Luke to converse with him. You will recall that Joseph, Mary and Jesus went to Jerusalem when the latter was twelve years of age; yet Joseph is not mentioned thereafter, not even when the family, embarrassed by Jesus' teaching and believing Him mentally ill, sought unsuccessfully to take Him home. Nor is Joseph present at the Crucifixion. Combine his absence there with the fact that Jesus commits His mother to John's care, and we may be quite certain that Luke could not have gathered his information from Joseph.

The next best source, of course, would be to return to Mary — this time not to ask about herself, but about her husband.

We might begin our interview this way: "Mary, what is the most impressive recollection you have regarding Joseph and the birth of Jesus, and what lesson do you find here for us?"

Mary might answer in this fashion, "Without question the finest thing I remember about my beloved husband, Joseph, is not his tender consideration en route to Bethlehem, nor his courage as he protected us from the wrath of Herod, but his righteousness when he learned about my pregnancy. Perhaps one of the finest things one could say about Joseph, or about any man, is that he was a man bent on doing right.

"As you may imagine, it was a terrible shock for him to discover that the girl to whom he was engaged was to have a baby. Put yourself in his place. What would you think? What else could you possibly think? How would you feel? What would you do? It is only as you try to put yourself in his shoes that you can begin to appreciate his greatness and goodness.

"Even before an angel made known to him that the child I carried was of the Lord, rather than to have me exposed, humiliated and punished, he proposed to separate from me quietly, with a simple vote of dismissal. Later when an angel appeared to him in a dream, even though he could not understand, he acted on faith, took me to be his wife and did the right thing."

Mary continues, "You ask what lesson there is here in the life of my husband. It is this: Joseph was a man who did the right thing. It is not always easy to do right; in fact, it is sometimes easier and more natural to do wrong. On occasion it can be most difficult to do right. It was for Joseph. But the man or woman who will do the right thing in the less important decisions of every day living will rise to the occasion in the hour of crisis. There is something magnificent about a man bent on doing right. My husband was such a man."

Will you join me again in imagining that we have walked the five miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in the days of St. Luke to see if we can find some eyewitnesses of the birth of Jesus? Possibly forty years have passed. Will there be anyone remaining who will remember? As we enter the little mountain village, we are drawn to the single inn; for it is here where Joseph and Mary sought lodging. We are greeted by a bearded old man, obviously the proprietor, and old enough to have managed the inn during the population enrollment authorized by Caesar.

If we have in our minds a hotel like the Conrad Hilton, the Ritz Carleton or even the typical frontier hotel in a western movie, we are rudely corrected. The khan is more a cave than a building. The stable is not separated from the hotel as our house and barns are in this country. The animals are kept in the center on a lower level than their owners; and on the four sides of this animal pit are raised alcove-like platforms, or three sided rooms, all open toward the animal area. As we reconstruct the birth of Jesus, we find that he was not born in some unnoticed, out-of-the-way, forgotten barn, but in the midst of people, some wealthy, some tired, some wildly gay.

We turn to the innkeeper and ask if he remembers a baby being born here during the census? He does, for not much has happened in this quiet sheep town since. He begins to reminisce and is apologetic: "I remember the man and his wife arrived late at night. He was older, and she was young. One could tell by their clothes they were poor. He asked for a room, but things were very crowded; and there were people who were able to pay plenty. Twice, while we talked, she cried out with pain. The baby was not far away, and I felt sorry for them; so I told them they could make a place in the corner with the animals. I did the best I could under the circumstances."

You know, friends, I have wondered if one could ask the old innkeeper now, not in the time of Luke, how he felt about having no room in the inn for the Son of God, what he would say or how he would react. At first I thought that he might be repentant and remorseful, but then I have wondered if he might not lash back with words like these:

"You look down your noses at me, you hypocrites. Isn't it a case of the pot calling the kettle black? Sure, I justified myself, just as you do. I remember my arguments with my conscience. 'Business is business,' I said. How did I know who he was? What about the other people? The guests? None of them offered to trade places with him, did they? I'm no worse than the rest of them. My inn was full, but I gave him all I had left. How about you? Do you give him first place? Doesn't he get crowded out of your life too? Doesn't he sometimes get the leftovers, even at Christmas time?"

I don't know how you feel as we walk away from the inn, but a refrain runs through my mind.

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room For Thy holy nativity.

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang, Proclaiming Thy royal degree;
But in lowly birth didst Thou come to earth, And in quiet humility.

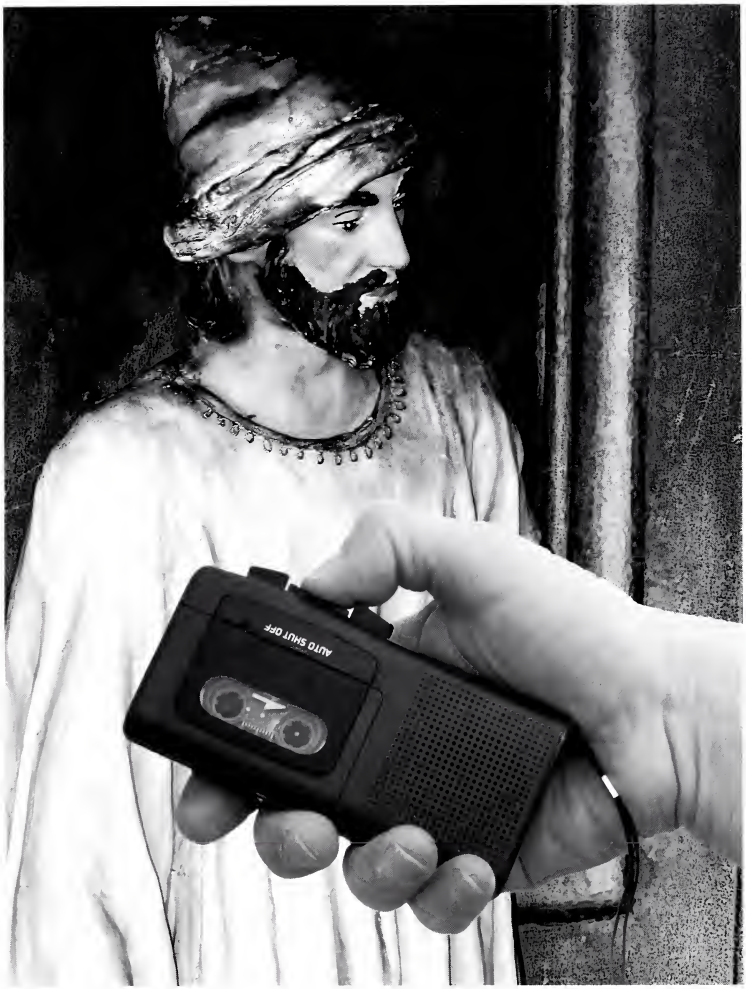
When the heavens shall ring, and the angels sing, At Thy coming to victory,
Let Thy voice call me home saying, "Yet there is room, There is room at My side for thee."

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus! There is room in my heart for Thee.
My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus! When Thou comest and callest for me.

I suppose one might expect to interview the shepherds or the wisemen, if you could locate them, or even a member of Herod's Court. While all of these would tell fascinating stories, I have chosen to visit an unknown, unnamed villager in Bethlehem, not because of the information he can contribute, but because of the lesson he can bring to each of us. In Luke 2:8-20 we read,

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things, which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

Imagine for a moment that we approach a simple home in Bethlehem. We inform the man of the house that we are seeking information about the birth of Jesus. "Can you tell us anything about it?" we ask. He answers, "Well, I lived here then; but I can't tell you much about it. There was considerable conversation over to the inn. Some shepherds even stopped up here and told about seeing a great light and hearing angels sing out there on the country-side. They said that the angels told them that they would find a baby born in a manger, and that this would be the Messiah."



"What then?" we urge. "Nothing," he answers. "They went back to their sheep, singing and praising the Lord."

"What did you do?" we ask eagerly. "Well, I wondered about those things they told me."

Oh, that's the tragedy of it all. "And they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds." To have been so close to greatness, and to have only wondered. A people who sat in darkness did not seek the light. They were confronted with the possibility that God was revealing himself around the corner, and they did not trouble themselves. To have the God of the universe invest himself in human form and to have any human being just yawn and wonder—that's the sin of it all.

There are those who this Christmas will find Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, while others wonder if it's possible. Some will find a spiritual reality that will change their whole way of life, and others will wonder if it is real. Some will sit in churches and be confronted with the power of God, and He will indwell them; and others in some pew will walk away unaware of anything going on. Christmas will come and go in 2004, and some will only wonder.✞



Joseph...

by the Rev. William Mather

Man in the Shadows

Again we recall the drama of the Christmas story. In song, sermon, and pageantry, we will journey to Bethlehem's manger. We will hear the angels singing glad tidings of Christ's birth. Shepherds, wise men, the mysterious star in the East, and other marvels will again play their important part in our observance of Christmas. It is a thrilling story that we never tire of hearing.

But how easy it is for us to be so taken with the moving events of those days that we miss a message. Sometimes meaningful events are overshadowed by the dramatic. Perhaps that is why Joseph, foster father of Jesus, often stands in the shadows as more colorful characters occupy front stage. Joseph was a carpenter who seemingly just happened to be the husband of Mary. He is with Mary in Bethlehem, but he plays a minor role. Yet if we dig out the facts, there is significance in the person of this humble man who is overshadowed not only by Jesus, and rightly so, but by Mary and the other characters in the Christmas record. He does not play a minor, but a major role in the life of Jesus. Putting together the few Biblical facts that we have, we discover that in Joseph we have one of the finest examples of what it means to be a man of God. How often we hear of the virtues of Mary. But what about Joseph?

In Joseph we have a man whose life is characterized by a love for God, love expressed in his obedience to God's Word. When the angel revealed that Mary, his intended bride, would give birth to the Son of God, he accepted by faith the message, though it involved a tremendous miracle. He believed what many would never believe. He would be scorned by some and misunderstood, even condemned by others. But Joseph was obedient to God's will; he accepted any humiliation it might bring upon him.

In two brief sentences Luke gives us insight into the home life of Jesus and the character of Joseph. He writes, "And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:39-40). The implication is that the grace of God rested upon Jesus, at least in part, because His parents, Joseph and Mary, ordered their lives in accordance with the teachings of God's law. As the head of this Jewish household, Joseph was the spiritual leader. Apparently he did not fail in his responsibility to God in the home.

It is clear that Joseph and Mary made frequent trips to Jerusalem to observe the Holy Days as prescribed by the law of God. In those days when travel was difficult, it was a long journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem. It is not strange that by the time Jesus was twelve, he had come to love God's law.

Now you may argue that Jesus was an exceptional child, for he was not only the Son of Mary and the foster Son of Joseph, but he was the very Son of God, and the grace of God rested upon him. He was an ideal child, and his home life had little to do with what he became. But we are still faced with certain facts. First of all, as we have said, God's grace rested upon him in part because he had parents who loved God and kept his law. Secondly, Jesus was not only the Son of God, but he was also the Son of Man. He lived a normal human life. His social, mental, emotional, and physical developments were normal. He had, as a child, the same family needs that you and I have. It is true that he lived even through childhood without sin. It is a mystery, but it is also true that his family contributed much to the shaping of his character.

He could have made an example of her, and no one would have blamed him.

Joseph's life was also characterized by a love for his family, shaped by the Word of God. I think that we have reason to believe that Jesus was reared in an atmosphere of human love and affection. You recall the circumstances of Jesus' birth. When Joseph discovered that Mary was to give birth to a child, before he knew that the child was miraculously conceived of the Holy Ghost, thinking that Mary had been unfaithful to him, he debated with himself concerning what he would do. Now the law allowed him to publicly break his engagement with Mary. He could have made an example of her, and no one would have blamed him. Many a man, perhaps the majority of men, would have reacted in that way, having become vindictive and hateful. But Matthew tells us that Joseph was a just man, unwilling to be a party to such action. While planning to break the engagement, he was searching for a way to do it as privately as possible, in order to save Mary misery and embarrassment. Such an attitude was exceptional, especially among religious men of those days.

Joseph had the capacity to be understanding and loving, even toward a person who had hurt him deeply. He loved the law of God, but he was not so slavishly bound by the letter of the law that he could not grasp its spirit.

The Pharisees would have heartlessly made an example of an unfaithful woman, but not Joseph. Is it any wonder that early in life Jesus saw through the hypocrisy of the Pharisees? That he could understand the meaning of love? "Oh," you say, "He was the Son of God. He didn't need anyone to teach him." But the fact of the matter is that he no doubt learned many lessons and spiritual insights from Joseph. We make much of

Mary and little of Joseph. He often fades into the background, but without question he was a spiritual giant.

Joseph was not only devoted to his wife Mary, but to his children also. We are all familiar with how Joseph fled to Egypt to save the life of Jesus. Jesus, of course, was not Joseph's own flesh and blood; yet to protect him, Joseph traveled with his family to this foreign country to stay until the wicked Herod was dead. Leaving his homeland with the security it offered, for no other reason than the safety of his foster son, was not an easy thing to do. Joseph was a poor man. We can only surmise the problems the journey created for him, but he willingly made all the sacrifices that were necessary to provide for his family. We need more fathers like Joseph today!

As we commemorate Christmas this year, let us not forget Joseph, although he must ever be overshadowed by his foster son, Jesus. He was an average man like you and me, but I am sure that in the eyes of God he is numbered among the world's greatest men. May we be challenged by this devoted father, who loved God and patterned his life after God's law.✞

Rev. William Mather is associate pastor of the North Scituate Advent Christian Church in Rhode Island.





WACA president, Brad Neil, explains to WACA regional superintendent, Jim Crouse, why he can't be called "Star of WACA."



Music and worship was led by the [illegible] worship team.

Highlights of WACA

October 7—10 the Western Advent Christian Association held its triennial convention in San D[illegible] Calif. enjoy each other's fellowship. Keynote speaker was Dr. Linus Morris, the international director [illegible] Christian European cities, including Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Stockholm and Budapest. The convention [illegible] nded with Community Church (AC), followed by an afternoon sendoff at the beach for a group of AC[illegible]s trave



Ice Cream! Advent Christian Village sponsored an ice cream social. ACV president, Jim Humbles, brought greetings and shared developments at the Village.



Fellowship. In addition to scheduled activit[illegible]s enjoy many opportunities to visit.



by t hpark Community Church



Dr. Linus Morris

San [ ], Calif. Delegates from across the western region met to elect officers, conduct business and rector Christian Associates International, a ministry that establishes high-impact churches in major tion [ ]uded with a Sunday morning worship service and fellowship meal hosted by the North Park f AC ists traveling from California to Florida.



activi gates enjoyed



They're off! AC cyclists begin their cross-country trek on the beaches of San Diego.

The Decision:

How one pastoral couple traded a thriving ministry and secure lifestyle for an unknown adventure in following the Lord.

By Jan Thomas

We had just added a family room to our home and remodeled all but one room of the rest of the house by June 2003. After thirty-one years of living and working at the Advent Christian Village, we were anticipating retiring in a few years and decided we needed to fix up the house while we were physically and financially able to do so. We were very comfortable in our home and environment, and had no thoughts of doing anything different at this stage of our lives.

Our home was located just 1 1/2 miles from the Village on 4 1/2 acres of property. Ron and I love the country life, the community is unsurpassed, and this was the perfect place to have raised our three children. We were very happy; the church was doing well; I enjoyed my job; life was good!

Then our comfortable, contented life changed. In November 2003 Ron was asked to consider the position of executive director of the Advent Christian denomination. Our first reaction was to say, "No." However, as with past opportunities to serve elsewhere, we prayed about it.

Previously, when other calls came our way, we received pretty clear direction from God within a short period of time. Sometimes he presented areas to serve that were just what we wanted, such as pastoring the Ashland, Maine, Advent Christian Church, which was a wonderful start for a new pastor and wife, or in serving children at Camp Suwannee and Advent Christian Village in our younger years of ministry. At other times, without any question, doors were closed. This time we didn't know what we should do. We vacillated each day as we sought wisdom and clarity about God's leading and for three months we wrestled with the decision; We felt we needed to give our answer to the Search Committee at the Executive Council meetings in February, and not keep them in "limbo" any longer.



The Thomas' home in Dowling Park, Fla.

One day in January, as we were sitting on the porch swing on our new patio, we contemplated the possibility of moving. Looking out across our backyard to the woods; glancing over to the garden that has been quite a challenge to get something to grow in, but finally was very productive; looking out to the pasture and remembering the night our pony had her baby (which was a surprise to us); all the hours of fun riding horses; reminiscing about the experiences in raising our children in this beautiful setting; plans for a tree fort in the woods for our grandchildren (along with other

ideas to make it a place they would look forward to visiting); little traffic we had to contend with; and all the experiences that have been shared with close friends for many years, we asked ourselves, "Can we really leave all of this—our children's 'home?'" Even though they are grown, this place was still "home" to them. However, the hardest thing about a possible move from Dowling Park would be to leave Ron's mother, who was in the Good Samaritan Center Nursing Home at the Village. What would her reaction be? Would it have a detrimental affect on her health? Even with so many wonderful memories, plus thoughts that were worrisome, we knew in our hearts that we *could* leave.



The Thomas' home in Charlotte, N.C.

Ron talked with a few close friends and family member during those few months, asking for their input and prayers through this process. When the deadline arrived, we still didn't know what to do. I was prepared for either staying or going and didn't know until after the meeting that morning what the outcome would be. From the counsel of some and the consensus of the members of the Executive Council, the decision to accept the position was made that day. After a few deep breaths, the realization that we were indeed going to move sunk in. There was a feeling of relief to have finally made a decision, but now that we had committed ourselves, we began to think about the daunting tasks of telling everyone, saying "good bye," and packing.

God paved the way for Ron's mother as we told her about our decision. She seemed to take the news very well and was glad we were only going as far as Charlotte—not out of the country!

I can't explain how, but God prepared not only us and our family, but also the Village community. Many Village folks affirmed our decision, and he also had been working in the lives of others, providing very capable people to take over our responsibilities there. We were so thankful that God gave us all of the wonderful experiences we had in Dowling Park, but we also knew that he would be with us in a new place as well. There is great comfort and peace that comes in relying on him. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

There is also much apprehension in beginning a new life in a different place, but it is accompanied with an element of excitement to see what God is going to do. I wondered what kind of job I would find. Having worked the same job for over seventeen years, I didn't know what lay ahead, and definitely felt I was about to leave my "comfort zone." Did I have the skills necessary to compete in a large city? I had never had to convince an employer that his/her business would be much better if I were hired! Where would we live? What would a new church be like, and how could we serve? What kind of neighbors would we have?



Jan Thomas and her husband, Ron

With the help of family and friends the packing was completed. Through many tears the "good byes" were said, and we arrived in Charlotte the end of May 2004.

God prepared *everything* for us. Finding a home was an easy adventure, and it is very close to AC headquarters; a job was offered to me, which I am enjoying very much; our new church family members are friendly, and we are beginning to find ways we can make a contribution to the life of the church; he even moved all of our children to Charlotte ahead of us! As we are settling in and making new friends, we praise the Lord for his abundant love, provision and involvement in every detail of life.✝

Practical

Effective disciplemaking involves *practical* instruction. That is, instruction put into practice, first by the teacher, then by the student. In his Great Commission, Jesus did not say "teaching them everything I have commanded you," but "teaching them to *obey* everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). We've not really learned it until we've lived it. That little phrase "to obey," or "to observe," makes all the difference. We live in a lazy world of "Do as I say, not as I do." But, of course, example is the only effective teacher. That is why you can't remember many quotes from your childhood Sunday school teachers, but you can sure remember what kind of persons they were.

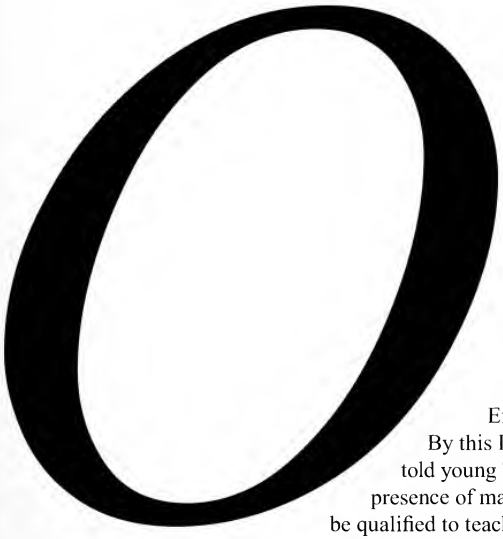
I remember one time when I was younger and less discrete, that I was apprehended for speeding, with a citation that read, "Failure to observe posted speed." So vehement was the urge to protest to the police officer that I had seen and duly noted every posted speed limit sign for the past several miles. However, he would not have been impressed with that level of "observation." Until it affected my behavior, it did not constitute obedience. What you *know* about God's Word will never change anyone else's life. But what you *do* about God's Word will. And that leads us to a second truth ...

Relational

Effective disciplemaking involves *relational* instruction. Even if you've never spent much time studying what Jesus actually did with those twelve men that he chose, and who came to be called his disciples, you have probably noticed at least one thing: He spent a lot of time with them. He lived with them, laughed with them, traveled with them, and ministered with them. In fact, it seems that he shared himself with them in just

about every aspect of his life and ministry, except perhaps his "quiet time" (frequent personal retreats for prayer). But do you know what? The one thing which he went off and did alone was the one thing they were eventually most eager to learn about! So one day when he had just completed his personal prayer time, they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). They did not want to miss out on anything that might make them more like the man they were striving to emulate!

Jesus spent most of his time with the few he was intentionally training to have maximum impact. And if you know anything about ministry, you realize that such a commitment requires enormous discipline. I would summarize this vital principle as follows: Real learning that results in real living is a product of real relationships. Yes, Jesus was vulnerable to them. Yes, Jesus was transparent with them. But of crucial importance, Jesus was available to them. Now *that* is a ministry that will impact lives! A third truth is …



ngoing

Effective disciplemaking involves *ongoing* instruction. By this I mean from generation to generation. Or as Paul told young Timothy, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). Four generations of disciples are identified within this one verse. If Christians could grasp this one truth, it would revolutionize the church's ministry: Everything we learn is not merely for our own edification; it is effectively, strategically passed on to others ("entrusted"). How could this ever happen?

Several years ago I was taking a graduate course at the University of Maine called "Emerging Patterns of Leadership." The instructor's teaching style was unique. Every week at class he had the students teach! There were about two dozen of us in the class, and every week he would begin by drawing three of our names from a stack of cards. The first one drawn would teach the lesson, the second would afterward critique the "teacher" on the session's performance, and finally the third would critique the critic. Our entire grade for the course depended upon how we performed when chosen in those random drawings. I never prepared for a course so intensely in my life! Every unit we read I would have to process with this constant question in mind: "If called upon, how can I most effectively communicate this material to others?" Can you imagine if you were to listen to every sermon, Sunday school lesson, or Bible study with that question foremost on your mind? Man, you

might even be taking notes! The fact is, if you are going to be a disciple who effectively makes disciples, then that kind of intentionality will become a way of life with you.

This brings us to the fourth truth, because maintaining that level of intensity and intentionality with everyone you might be able to influence seems almost impossible! Well, it is. So remember this…

Selective

Effective disciplemaking involves *selective* instruction. Jesus specifically called twelve to pour his life into with this kind of intensity. And he is God! How in the world can we expect to personally disciple a whole church?! The obvious answer: we can't. Don't get me wrong. We have a responsibility to witness to everyone. A pastor must find a way to effectively be a shepherd to the *entire* flock (hopefully assisted by several under-shepherds). But you will only be able to effectively disciple a few. It will become their joy to disciple others, who will disciple others, until not only the whole church, but the whole world is discipled! This is Jesus' plan, and it is also his command (Matt. 29:19).

Look again at Paul's words to Timothy (in 2 Tim. 2:2), and you will notice that he admonished him to entrust the vital teaching "to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Timothy was selective with this trust, intentionally and with intensity making disciples of a few so that the gospel message could be multiplied in its impact!

Afraid to be accused of playing favorites? Perhaps we should be more concerned about disobeying Christ, who chose twelve (John 15:16), then did specific leadership training with an inner circle of three or four (Mark 9:2, et al.), and even seemed to have a favorite student whom he especially loved (John 19:25-27). May God give us the courage to risk criticism, if need be, to intentionally select and disciple a few, who will then be equipped to reach others.

Effective disciplemaking involves a specific, intentional instruction that is practical, relational, ongoing, and selective. Not much to have learned in eighteen years, you might say. But you know, it just could change the world, a few people at a time. Best of all, it's something that even I can do!✞



Rev. David Ross is pastor of Fellowship Advent Christian Church, Taylorsville, N.C.

(Editorial continued)

God is good. But I have to admit that list makes me uncomfortable. What about people whose year was very different from mine? What about the 75% that died from a torn carotid artery? Was God good to them? What about the many victims of divorce? Would they agree with my testimony of God's goodness? What can we say to Cardinals fans? Does their team's defeat in every Series game mean that God isn't good?

Even my own experiences, when dissected, might give cause for doubt. If God is good, why did he let me spend six months wallowing in near-hypochondria over my unseen, life-threatening condition? And how come the free SUV lost a tire and brakes the first time I took it on a trip? And sure, I've also got a BMW; but it's 17 years old and I've already had to replace many of its parts. If God wanted to impress me with his goodness, shouldn't I have a new BMW? Or, at least one with less than 250,000 miles on it?

We paint ourselves onto the edge of a theological cliff when we only measure God's goodness by temporal blessings. God *is* good…regardless of our present circumstances. Church testimony times often consist of stories about the Lord's temporal blessings, as if they prove his eternal goodness. But what about the person in the next pew, whose present experience doesn't include such proof? If my children are a blessing and that's a sign of God's goodness, what about the infertile couple two rows back? Or, the mom sitting next to them whose teenager is on drugs? My "proof" of God's goodness may fan their suspicions that God is cruel or capricious.

We need to distinguish between God's temporal blessings and his goodness. Adam and Eve were led astray at this very point. Living in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden with all their needs fully satisfied, they eventually began to doubt God's goodness. Satan planted a seed of suspicion by pointing to the one thing God withheld, implying, "If God were *really* good, would he keep anything from you? If he were really *good*, wouldn't he give you the same knowledge he enjoys? He is *not* good—he's laughing behind your backs, keeping you ignorant and obedient, like some kind of subservient, hairless Golden Retrievers."

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis illustrates the power of believing in God's goodness even when there is little visible evidence of it. Lewis imagines a dialogue between two demons, which reveals how devastating this truth must be for them:

"Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys."

Belief in God's goodness is the larger half of any true faith: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists [unrepentant atheists won't come] and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him [we won't seek God if we're convinced he is cruel, stingy, or indifferent]" (Heb. 11:6).

During the holidays you'll likely be inundated with messages of God's goodness wrapped in material blessings. Remember that the ultimate evidence of his goodness was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. Whether you're healthy or sick, rich or poor, feeling blessed or not, God has blessed you *eternally* in Jesus. Whether or not the Christmas tree is surrounded by a loving family and nice gifts, God will always be good, and that alone is cause to celebrate.✞

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

It is said that a dog is man's best friend. Through the years I lived on my childhood memories to validate that statement, as our family had a dog. But for more years than I care to admit, the closest my sons came to owning a dog was to set eyes on the ones owned by family or friends. It seemed to them that we were the only ones without a dog—until a year ago, that is. After my older sons were away at college, we gave in! Much to the delight of our youngest son, we became the owners of a puppy.

Many years ago in Edinburgh, Scotland, a man named John Gray found a stray terrier wandering around the streets. Gray took the dog in and named him "Bobby." The two became inseparable until John died in 1858. From the day of his burial forward, Bobby could be found standing guard over John Gray's grave. For fourteen long years, until his own death, Bobby remained faithful beside his master's grave. Through drenching rains, howling winds, hailstorms and heavy snow, Bobby never left his post. A more faithful friend you could not find!

Faithfulness isn't reserved for dogs. As servants of the Master, you and I are called to be faithful. We are not called to be successful, or to gain notoriety. We are simply called to live a life of faithfulness. While this is a challenge for the average person, the great mystery of God's grace is that even when we are *un*faithful to God, he is still faithful to us. Paul reminds Timothy, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (2Timothy 2:13). The very nature of God is that he is faithful. And he never changes!

To consider God's faithfulness is to see his great love. Love and faithfulness are inextricably intertwined. God loves us more than we can fathom, and his faithfulness toward us is greater than we will ever know. As our love for him overflows in faithful living, our lives will reflect a similar dedication so evident in the life of a terrier named Bobby. His memory is not lost because a fitting monument was built in his honor in that same cemetery. Likewise, a fitting honor for every disciple of Jesus is to one day hear the words of our Lord, "Well done, thou good and *faithful* servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Our "puppy" has now matured into a full grown, ninety-five pound cherished member of the family. She is much more than a dog. A faithful friend and companion, she lies at our feet, barks when danger is looming, and showers us with affection. She has so endeared herself to us we can't begin to imagine life without her. And why should we, when she serves as a powerful reminder of the call to faithfulness! ✞

Twisted Scriptures

Rev. Tom Warner



Some "prophecy experts" use Matthew 24:36-42 to argue that certain moral problems we see today are a definite sign that Christ's return must be very near. In that passage our Lord Jesus spoke of his coming, and he said, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man… Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

The "experts" think Jesus was providing a list of particular sins that characterized Noah's time – gluttony, drunkenness, and an epidemic of divorce and remarriage, and that he was saying the very same sins will be prevalent just before the Second Coming. Statistics about alcoholism and divorce in our nation may also be thrown in to bolster their point. They finally conclude that we are on the verge of Christ's return, since modern people are supposedly guilty of the same sins committed by people just before the Flood.

Such an interpretation makes for an exciting sermon, but it misses the real point Jesus was making. Notice that the comparison he made ("As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man") is prefaced and followed by statements that no one knows the day of his return. In *that* sense it will be much like what happened at the time of the Flood. It will take most people entirely by surprise.

Unbelievers in Noah's time didn't expect a world-altering Divine judgment. They were going about their normal routine – eating and drinking (having meals), getting married, and giving their children in marriage – without a thought of what God might do. When the Flood came, they were caught completely off guard. In a similar way, just before Christ's return, most people will be preoccupied with their daily activities; they'll be totally unprepared for his glorious appearing.

So, our Lord was not describing the evil conditions of the pre-Flood world, which will supposedly be duplicated in the end time. Jesus was warning people not to become *so absorbed* with the normal, legitimate activities of everyday life that they fail to prepare for his coming.

Don't let daily life dull your spiritual sensitivity. Keep watch, i.e., be spiritually alert. Though we don't know *when*, we *do* know our King will come again. That should influence how we live every day.✞

Rev. Tom Warner is currently a chaplain with Ministry to the Aged, serving retirement homes and care centers in Boise, Idaho.

…things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

SOLVE

THE CLUES AND FILL IN THE CORRESPONDING LETTERS BELOW. THE FIRST ONE IS DONE FOR YOU.



A. Twine **R O P E** (44 17 50 34)

B. Back of the foot ____ (36 55 19 31)

C. Sheep's clothing ____ (12 4 46 54)

D. "Stubborn as a ....." ____ (48 22 14 60)

E. To pick ____ (16 42 10 52 38 51)

F. To envision ____ (45 3 40 20 18)

G. Payment due notice ____ (33 13 32 23)

H. During the time ____ (29 27 56 61 24)

I. Out of practice ____ (58 5 57 35 9)

J. Something to write on ____ (41 59 53 37 21)

K. Bottom extremity of the body ____ (1 28 7 6)

L. After three ____ (8 2 11 25)

M. Put away in organized fashion ____ (47 30 15 43)

N. Child's favorite word ____ (26 39 49)

Matthew2:6

K 1	L 2	F 3		C 4	I 5	K 6		K 7	F		I 9	E 10
L 11		C 12	G 13	D 14	M 15		E 16	A 17 O				F 20
	J 21	D 22	G 23	H 24	L 25		N 26	H 27	K 28		H 29	M 30
B 31	G 32		G 33	A 34 E		I 35	B 36	J 37		E 38	N 39	F 40
J 41	E 42	M 43	A 44 R	F 45		C 46	M 47		D 48	N 49		A 50 P
E 51	E 52	J 53	C 54	B 55		H 56	I 57	I 58	J 59	D 60	H 61	



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Find these holiday words:

Angels
Carols
Cookies
Gifts
Holly
Hope
Joy
Lights
Manger
Mistletoe
Ornaments
Peace
Tree

T	W	C	J	P	S	E	I	K	O	O	C	A
O	H	A	O	E	T	R	L	I	J	G	A	N
C	O	R	N	A	M	E	N	T	S	N	E	P
A	L	R	A	N	A	E	E	S	G	E	M	E
N	L	J	N	G	N	C	O	R	N	P	I	A
F	Y	N	I	E	I	J	Y	N	T	R	S	C
S	P	G	I	L	M	F	I	K	R	G	T	E
T	R	E	K	S	E	R	T	H	A	L	L	Y
H	Y	O	O	K	H	O	O	S	E	S	E	T
G	I	F	R	E	G	N	A	M	G	P	T	L
I	H	S	J	N	P	H	Y	I	O	J	O	O
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S	F	M	A	C	A	R	O	L	S	T	R	E







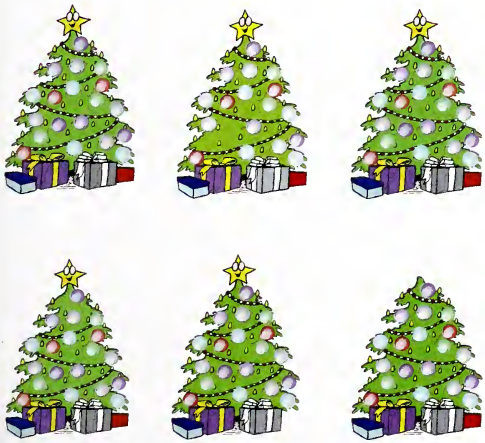








Find the two matching Christmas trees



UNSCRAMBLE the underlined words in each of the Bible verses.

1. Glory to God in the ghseiht, and on etahr peace to emn on whom his favor rests. Luke 2:14

2. When ethy saw the arts, they were joodevyre. Matthew 2:10

3. My usol glorifies the Ldro and my spirit rejoices in God my ioSarv. Luke 1:46,47

4. She will give hbrit to a ons, and you are to give him the nema Jesus... Matthew 1:21

5. But yMra treasured up all these htgsin and pondered them in her rheta. Luke 2:19



By Randee Davis

I am always amazed how God puts us right where he wants us to be when he wants us to be there. I did not have time in my busy schedule to "job-shadow" my co-worker, but here I was sitting in Family Court listening to her cases. I have always worked on the other side of the building with aged and disabled adults and have had very little experience with Child Welfare. God knew about this article I had been working on about the fractured family in America and the breakdown of our society. Now here I was watching, up close and personal, fractured families, shattered lives and the very breakdown of our society. It was a heart-breaking experience.

Several years ago I remember having a conversation with Barbara Deverick, who was a wonderful friend and mentor of mine. We were discussing children and the problems they were facing at that time. She said, "Children are confused and angry because they can't cope with or understand what is happening in their families. The breakdown of our society will be brought about by the breakdown of the family." Barbara was a very wise woman and I'm sorry to say that Barbara was absolutely right. Just look at how confused and angry our children are today.

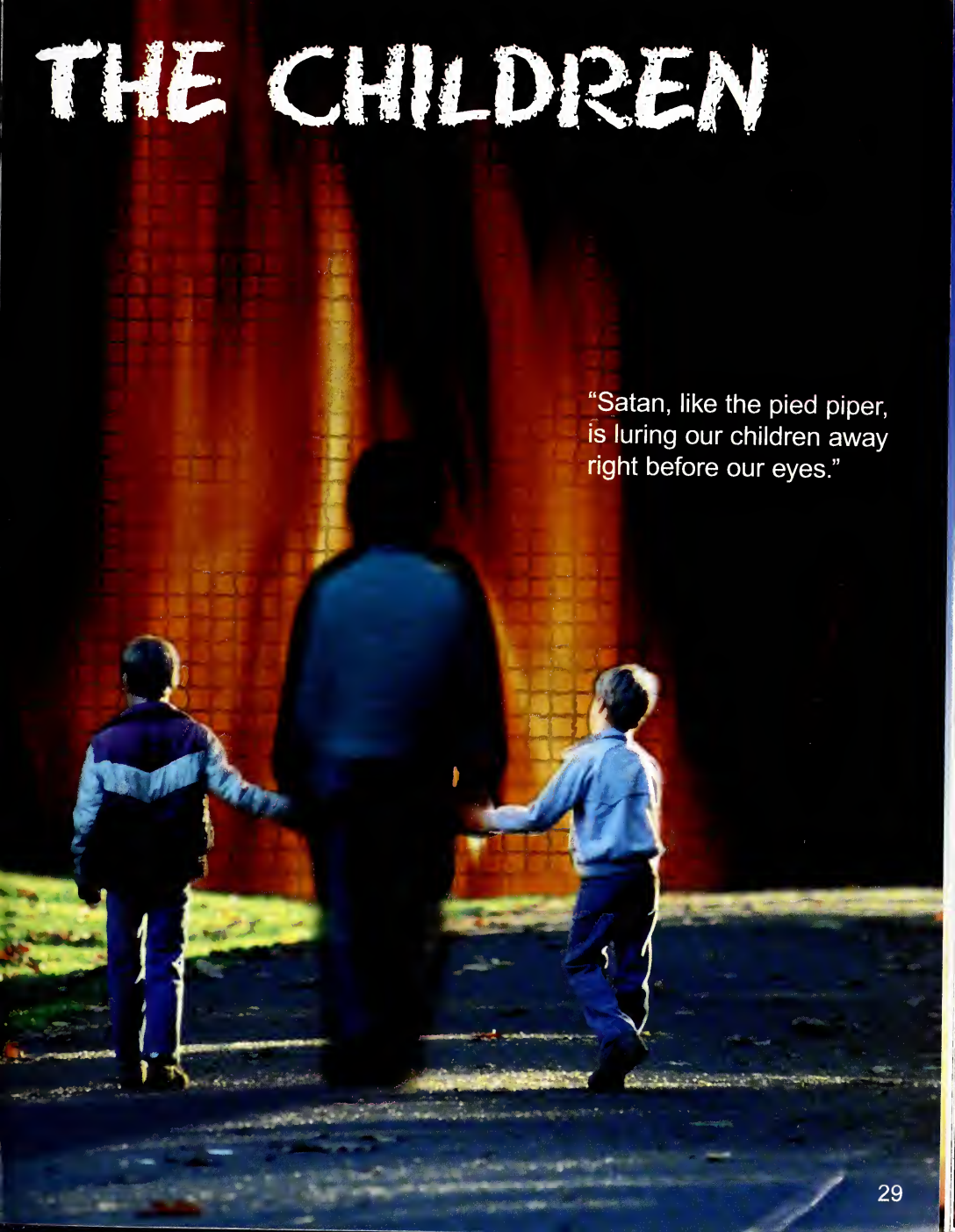
What is happening to the American family today? Increasing waves of declining morality are battering our nation's families. The ever-increasing divorce rate subjects our children to physically and emotionally absent parents. Millions of children are involved in divorce cases every year, and more and more children have one or both parents missing.

Most of our very young children today are being raised in day-care facilities as young mothers find it necessary to work outside the home. This phenomenon has increased marital stress and contributed to the high rate of divorce. Society seems to convey the idea that women are failures if they do not pursue a career. Women who aspire to be stay-at-home wives and mothers are looked upon as second-class citizens.

The obtrusion of television into the home has affected the American family in ways we have not yet begun to fathom. In my day it was "Ozzie & Harriett" and the "Andy Griffith Show." Today innocent children, on any given day, can be exposed to all types of graphic violence, murders, assaults, rapes, all kinds of crime, pornography, nudity, sexuality, alternate life styles, promiscuity, horrible language, drug and alcohol use and so on. These are all things that come right into our warm Christian homes at our invitation when we turn on our TV sets.

The horrors we can invite in with the internet by far surpass those of the TV! Pornography abounds on the internet. Children are lured into "chat rooms"

THE CHILDREN



"Satan, like the pied piper, is luring our children away right before our eyes."



where they are exposed to every kind of predator imaginable. Your child can be subjected to the vilest of child molesters while simply surfing the net right there in their own bedrooms. Children have literally been lured out of their homes, abducted, raped and murdered by pedophiles they met on the internet.

Everyday we see more and more the influence these things are having on our children:

Children carrying guns to school.

Children killing other children.

Children addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Suicides among teenagers and even younger children.

Children having abortions.

Children having children.

Satan, like the pied piper, is luring our children away right before our eyes.

Oh, how my heart breaks for our children, for we have stood by and allowed them to be robbed of their innocent childhood days. I praise God for my childhood. I grew up in the 50s in rural North Carolina. My mother was a stay-at-home mom to my four siblings and me. I never knew anything but unconditional love from my parents. I was never exposed to violence or any of the things our children see everyday on TV. I did not even know that child abuse existed until I was an adult. I was always encouraged to do my best and taught by example to love the Lord. It should be the right of every child to have such a childhood.

As Christians we must take a stand for our children and do as our Lord has commanded us. We must follow his example concerning children as found in Mark 10: 13-16;

"And they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them,

"Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all." And he took them in his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them."

This short piece was on the back of our church bulletin on June 14, 1959. I was eleven years old. Reverend Harold Crocker was my pastor and this must have come from part of his sermon on that Sunday. It was entitled:

Christ and the Children

"We would have lacked one of the sweetest, gentlest, and most human portraits of our Lord had the Gospel writers left out the story of Christ with the children. Many a mother has bent over her child with deeper love, many a parent has felt the sacredness of his trust more keenly, and much of the practical benevolence and noble sacrifice for the welfare of children has come about because of this one episode in the story of Jesus.

Christ called a little child and set him in the midst of the crowd about him. He called the child; and the child came. There is much in the best of us, which resists Christ and his claims upon us. Not so with the child.

Our Lord then used the occasion to teach the lesson, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This is not to call all children innocent! Children are not innocent as every parent and teacher knows. Nor does this mean that only children are eligible for kingdom citizenship. This is an approval of certain childlike character traits which man must have in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The words of the Master rebuke those who would deal with children indiscriminately in their religious teaching. It is a mistaken notion that children need to be intellectually forced to the Saviour, or frightened into trusting him. They need to be ALLOWED to come. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." They need a very gentle leading, and, above all, nothing done to hinder or discourage them.

It is the sacred duty of every congregation of every church to make adequate provision for the spiritual training of its children. Boys and girls of every family should be taught as soon as they can learn holy truths; they should be brought to public worship as soon as they can behave with propriety; they should be regarded with love and affection as the future congregation."

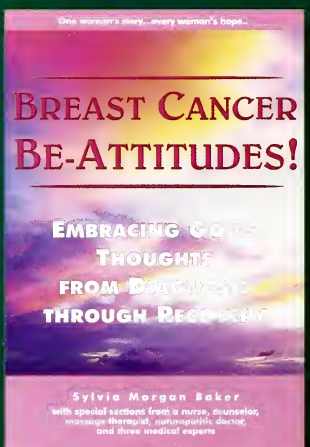
This last paragraph is exactly what we in WH&FMS have been striving to do for years. We are all about making "adequate provision for the spiritual training of our children." We sponsor programming each year for King's Jewels, Junior Action and YWA groups. We are committed to following the example of our Lord concerning the children and placing upon them the value they deserve.

Please join us as we pray for our families and our children.

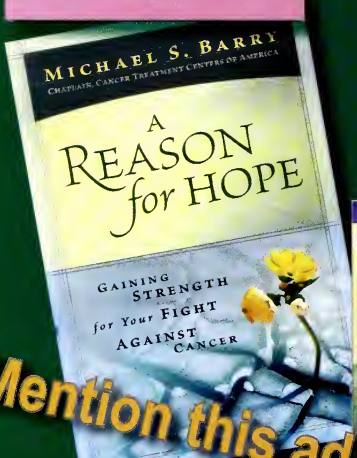
Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."✞

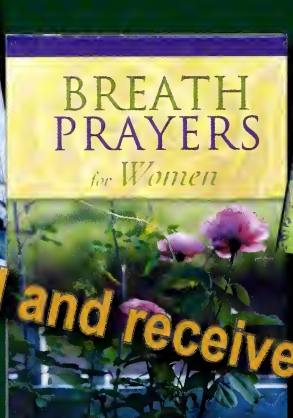


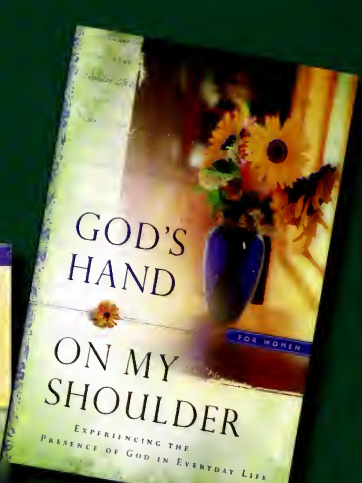
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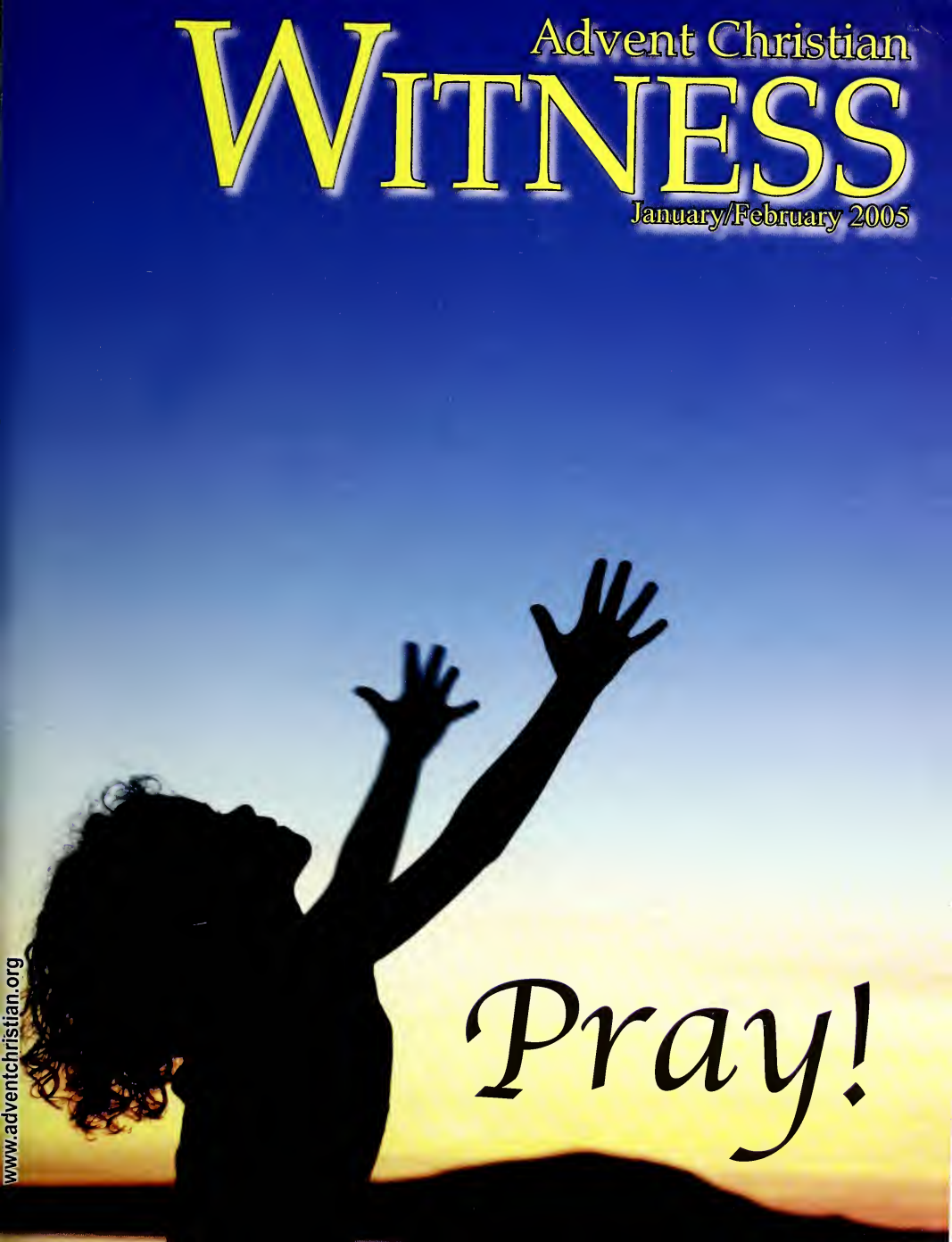
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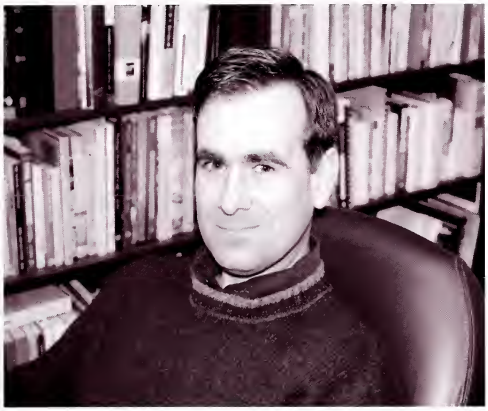
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From the Editor



Against the Odds

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV).

It was the Sunday after Christmas and my wife and I wanted to go to an evening service. The only option within 20 miles was a nearby American Baptist church—a white clapboard structure nestled in a grove of evergreens with a Christmas card frosting of snow. When the Wheaton family filled a pew in that little country church, we literally doubled the number of worshipers in attendance.

After the service, I introduced myself to the pastor and told him I worked for the Advent Christian General Conference. He gladly responded, "We have a Sunday School teacher who's Advent Christian!" I thought he must be mistaken. After all, we're a small denomination, so I figured he must have confused us with some larger group with a similar-sounding name. Less than ten others were present in that little Baptist church. Yet, here was the pastor telling me that someone else in the room was an Advent Christian.

I've never had a course in statistics or probability, but I have some sense of the great unlikelihood of certain events. For instance, it's highly unlikely that

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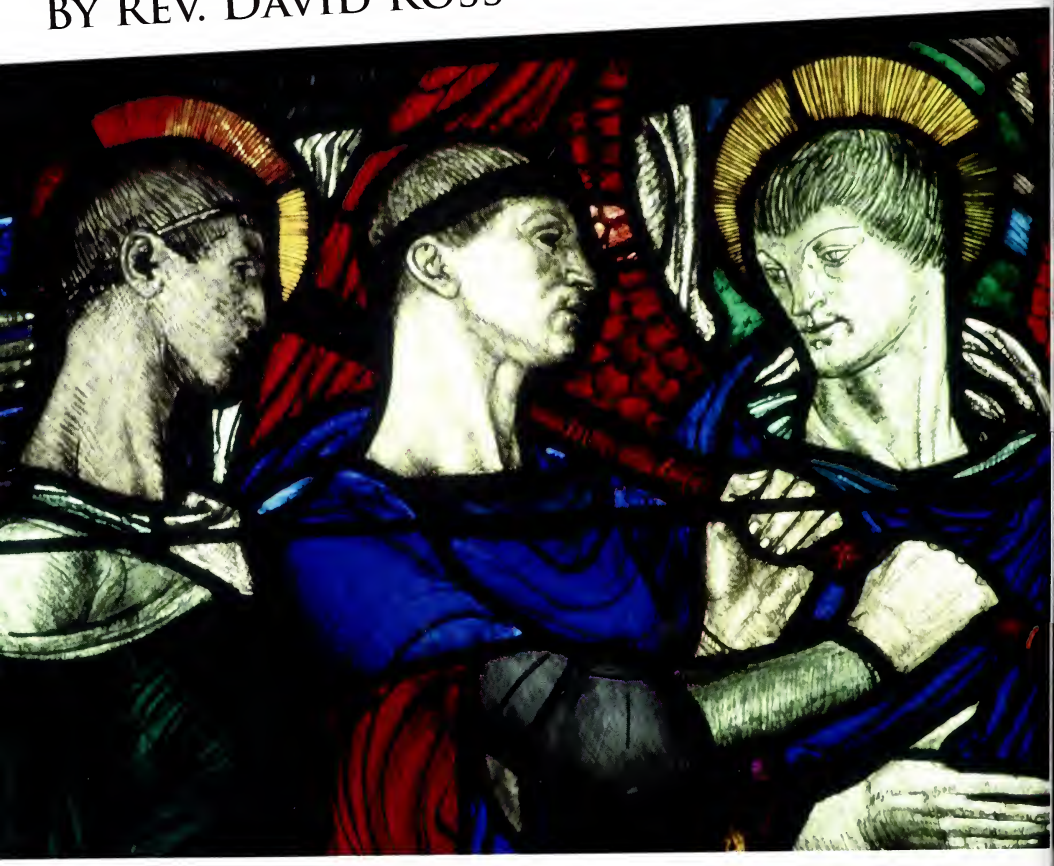
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What is Disciplemaking? Part 3

By Rev. David Ross



This Time It's Personal

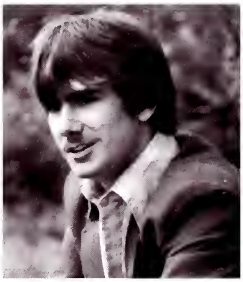
Several months ago one of our pastors, Rev. David W. Davis, wrote to ask the following question:

"We have heard a lot about disciplemaking over the past few years, but I would like someone to tell me exactly what it means to make disciples. Would you please publish a good explanation of what is involved in making disciples?"

To answer this question we asked one of Advent Christian General Conference's leading proponents of disciplemaking, former executive director Rev. David Ross, to share his views and experiences on the subject. The following is part three of a three-part series answering the question:

What is disciplemaking?

Disciplemaking in the pattern of Jesus is so relational that it is hard to discuss it in merely philosophical terms. We seem to learn best by personal experience. So, at the risk of embarrassing (or even infuriating!) a few very good friends, let me share with you some of the things the Lord has been teaching me through three personal disciplemaking relationships. And yes, we're going to name names.



Keith Wheaton in 1981

You know Keith Wheaton as the efficient, professional editor of the award-winning *Advent Christian Witness* magazine (and other A.C. publications). But I was introduced to Keith when he was an inquisitive, ambitious, aspiring eighth-grade musician. It is not merely in retribution for delegating to me this extensive, three-part writing assignment that I bring Keith into this discussion by way of example. My experiences with Keith have taught me a great deal about the potential of intensive, interpersonal training. Keith has always been intense concerning whatever he is applying himself to do. And as an adolescent, he was perhaps more intent upon learning what he could from select, experienced, trusted mentors than any young person I had known up to that point.

(Continued on page 20)

A teenager's decision to visit an African-American church leads to an experience he will never forget.

One Sunday a Church on Le

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By David S. McCarthy

The speaker studied his audience for a moment, then cleared his throat and announced, "My topic today is 'Going Forward by Going Backward.'" Lights in my brain flashed "warning: you are about to encounter industrial-strength boredom." I sighed and wondered why this red-blooded teenager had chosen to waste a gorgeous October afternoon indoors at a church service.

I was a high school senior and God had been sending clear signals that I should go into Christian service. For over a year I had immersed myself in the Bible, witnessed to anything that moved and visited churches. I especially enjoyed visiting churches of different denominations where I could observe preachers in action and experience varied styles of worship. In my hometown of Portsmouth, N.H., I'd been inside every church building with one exception: the African-American church on Pearl Street. For a long time I'd wanted to check out this congregation but held back. There were rumors about shouting preachers and sermons that ran well beyond the starting time of NFL games. Besides, it was 1952, and I wasn't sure how it would look for a white teenager to be seen entering a black church.

One day, our local newspaper reported that the church on Pearl Street was going to hold a big anniversary celebration on a Sunday afternoon. A guest choir would sing and a seminary student from

Boston would deliver the message. When I learned that members of the local clergy association would bring greetings, I knew that other Caucasians would be present. I decided to attend the program.

Mentally I computed this man's measurements and decided he would make a great stand-in for Zacchaeus.

When the day arrived, the kids in my youth group drove to a rally in a nearby town, but I stayed behind and walked to the church on Pearl Street. The sanctuary was upstairs and much smaller than it appeared from the outside. About one hundred people had squeezed into the pews, and a dozen of us had to stand in the back. I was relieved to find that the service was lively, but not raucous. The hymns were familiar, sung as only an African-American congregation can sing. I was moved and wondered why singing didn't reach the same level of enthusiasm and joy in the churches I knew best. The visiting choir delivered a stirring rendition of "A City Called Heaven," featuring a gifted soprano soloist. The beautiful young black woman not only gave a "professional" performance, but her features glowed with a deep love for Christ. Then it was time for the sermon.

My experience taught me that great preachers are tall and dynamic — think of Billy Graham. Mentally I computed this man's measurements and decided he would make a great stand-in for Zacchaeus. Strike one!

My experience also taught me that great sermons have something called "bulletin board appeal." Titles such as "Will the World End Before 1960?" and "Have You Committed the Unpardonable Sin?" ranked high on my list. This man's "Going Forward by Going Backward" didn't even register on my rating scale. Strike two!

I expected "strike three" at any moment, but it never came. When the speaker read Luke 2:41-52 about Jesus being left behind as a boy, I saw that the title I had so quickly dismissed made perfect sense. The speaker explained that in Bible times men and women walked to and from feasts in Jerusalem in separate groups. Small children stayed with the women, but by age twelve a boy might elect to travel with either the males or females. So when the men started out, Joseph assumed that Jesus was with Mary, and when the women started out, his mother thought he was with Joseph. That night when the two groups converged, they realized that Jesus was with neither company. He had been left behind. Before Mary and Joseph could *go forward* to their destination they had to *go backward* to find the Jesus they had left behind.

That's when the young seminary student waxed eloquent. He pointed out that on this anniversary Sunday the church on Pearl Street was making big plans. They were thinking about outreach programs, building an educational unit—things that today would be called casting a vision for the future. "But," said the preacher, "before going forward with your great plans, you need to check and make sure you have Jesus with you. Maybe you'll discover that, like Mary and Joseph, you've left Jesus behind. If so, you'll need to go back to where you left him and make sure he's with you for the rest of your journey."

The longer he preached, the more compelling his sermon became. The physical stature of the man no longer mattered, for he was delivering a message from God. His sentences flowed with a dynamic rhythm I'd seldom heard, his words marching in a stately cadence that reinforced his major points. His oratory soared, and we were carried beyond that little sanctuary to the gates of glory. I was spellbound!

I only remember a handful of sermons from my teen years, but I've never forgotten what I heard and felt

that Sunday afternoon. In the decades since, I've dreamed dreams for my personal life and for the churches I've served. As the excitement builds and my heart beats faster with thoughts of what God might help me accomplish, I find myself standing again in that small African-American church hearing the words, "As you make plans to go forward, be sure you have Jesus with you. And if he isn't there, go back to where you left him. Remember, you can only go forward by going backward."

I've learned that when making plans for growth and expansion, a church needs to ask, "Is Jesus with us?" It's possible to make wonderfully creative plans on our own, only to find that we have overlooked Jesus. He himself said, "Without me you can do nothing," and whatever we attempt will only count for eternity if we have Jesus with us each step of the way.

That's also true in our personal lives. As Christians we frequently need to ask, "Is Jesus with me?" When we first meet Jesus as our Forgiver and Leader, we fully intend to always put his interests first and seek his will. But then we start skipping a daily quiet time or neglect attending public worship or Bible studies. Any relationship that isn't nourished regularly grows distant over time, and our relationship with the Lord is not exempt from that danger. And sometimes we fail to consider his wishes or obey his directions. Then one day, we wake up to discover that we've settled on some personal agenda instead of his, and left him behind. This can happen at any age, no matter how long one has been a believer. But the good news is that, when we return to where we left him, he welcomes us and offers to restore and guide.

Yes, my afternoon at the church on Pearl Street turned out to be well spent, but I've lived with one regret ever since. You see, I didn't stay for the social gathering after the service. As soon as the benediction was pronounced, I walked out of the building instead of going downstairs to the fellowship hall. Had I not left in such a rush, not only could I have enjoyed cookies and punch, but I could have told the young seminary student that I would never forget his message—and shaken the hand of Martin Luther King, Jr.

And the soprano soloist? Her name was Coretta Scott, soon to be Mrs. Coretta Scott King. You never know. You just never know.

Perhaps you will remember my experience, but it's more important that you remember the point of the sermon Dr. King preached on that October afternoon. You can only go forward—as a Christian and as a church—by making sure that Jesus is with you. And if you discover you've left him behind, go back to where you left him. He waits for you with open arms.✞

The longer he preached, the more compelling his sermon became. The physical stature of the man no longer mattered, for he was delivering a message from God.

Rev. David S. McCarthy is pastor of the Hickory Grove AC Church, Saluda, S.C.

Our History

William Miller and the Early Phases of the Advent Movement

Part 1

Address delivered at the biennial meeting of the Advent Christian General Conference, June 26, 1932, Campground, Plainville, Connecticut

by Orrin Roe Jenks

William Miller and Public Services

William Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, February 15, 1782, to William and Paulina Phelps Miller.

When the boy was four years old his parents moved to the eastern section of New York. Here William grew to manhood; received a limited education in the public school; was married June 29, 1803, to Lucy Smith; became a soldier and served courageously in the War of 1812; acquired two hundred acres of land and built a commodious home at Low Hampton, New York, which was the family center until his death.

After reaching maturity William became a Deist, thus joining the class of those who stood opposed to Christianity. However, he was related to those who were consecrated followers of Christ, and was thus held in close touch with the Church.

Elisha Miller, an uncle of William Miller, was pastor of the Baptist Church in Low Hampton where a house of worship was erected. In this church it was the custom at times for a sermon to be read in the absence of the regular pastor. While reading a sermon on a Lord's Day in September 1816, a great conviction came upon Mr. Miller. "He was overpowered by the inward struggle of emotion," says Bliss, and took his seat. Mr. Miller has described this experience in these words:

"Suddenly the character of a Savior was vividly impressed upon my mind. It seemed that there might be a Being so good and compassionate as to himself atone for our transgressions, and thereby save us from suffering the penalty of sin. I immediately felt how lovely such a Being must be; and imagined that I could cast myself into the arms of, and trust in the mercy of, such a One. But the question arose, 'How can it be proved that such a Being does exist?' Aside from the Bible I found that I could get no evidence of the existence of such a Savior, or even of a future state. I felt that to believe in such a Savior without evidence would be visionary in the extreme. I saw that the Bible did bring to view just such a Savior as

Adventist Movement



William Miller was born 1782

Historical Events

1775-1783 Revolutionary War



1784 Benjamin Franklin invented bifocal glasses



1786 First ice cream made commercially in NYC



1789 George Washington elected first President



1793 Eli Whitney invented cotton gin



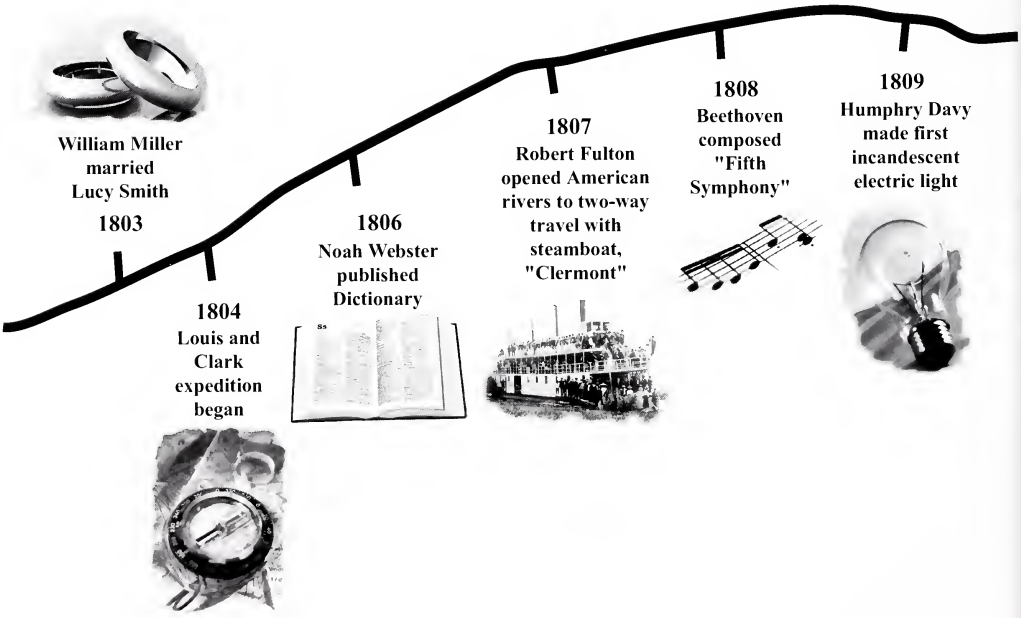
I needed; and I was perplexed to find how an uninspired book should develop principles so perfectly adapted to the wants of a fallen world. I was constrained to admit that the Scriptures must be a revelation from God. They became my delight; and in Jesus I found a friend. The Savior became to me the chiefest among ten thousand; and the Scriptures, which before were dark and contradictory, now became the lamp to my feet and light to my path."

Thus, at the age of thirty-four, William Miller was changed from an unhappy Deist into a joyful, consecrated follower of Christ. He now erected the family altar, united with the Baptist Church of Low Hampton and became active in the work of the church.

Mr. Miller became a careful student of the Word of God. He thus writes: "The Bible now became my chief study, and I can truly say I searched it with great delight. I found the half was never told me. I wondered why I had not seen its beauty and glory before, and marveled that I could have ever rejected it. I found everything revealed that my heart could desire, and a remedy for every disease of the soul. I lost all taste for other reading, and applied my heart to get wisdom from God."

From the time of his conversion until Mr. Miller entered upon his public labors there is a period of fifteen years of patient study of the Bible with particular reference to the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. In this study the following conclusion was reached:

"While thus studying the Scriptures, I became sat-

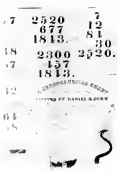




Miller's home built in Low Hampton, NY
1815



William Miller dedicated his life to Christ
1816



After years of studying the Bible, Miller stated his belief that Christ will return on or before 1843
1822



Capt. William Miller served in War
1812

1812
US declared war on Britain



1814
Frances Scott Key wrote "The Star Spangled Banner"



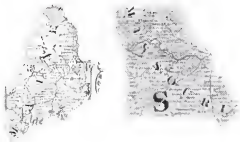
1815
George Stevenson patented first steam locomotive



1819
Rene Laennec invented stethascope

1820
Missouri Compromise- Maine admitted to US as free state; Missouri as slave state





isfied if the prophecies which have been fulfilled in the past are any criterion by which to judge the manner of the fulfillment of those which are future, that the popular views of the spiritual reign of Christ—a temporal millennium before the end of the world, and the Jews' return—are not sustained by the Word of God…I found it plainly taught in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ will again descend to this earth, coming in the clouds of heaven, in all the glory of the Father."

In a statement of his faith made under date of September 5, 1822, in Article XV, he says: "I believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near, even at the door, even within twenty-one years—on or before 1843."

Gradually, year by year, the conviction grew that he must make known to his fellow-men his belief that the Lord would come personally not later than the year 1843.

Mr. Miller began his public labors in the autumn of 1831. His first public lecture on the Second Coming of Christ was delivered in Dresden, New York. Such was the effect of his message on this day, which appears to have been the second Sunday in August 1831, that Mr. Miller was requested to remain and

lecture during the week. The people came together in large numbers from the neighboring towns, a revival broke out, and in thirteen families all but two persons were hopefully converted.

Other invitations were received from the churches of lecturing in the churches, chiefly in New York and Vermont.

In nearly every place revivals attended and followed his series of lectures. Of one period—August to December 1836—he writes: "I have not visited a place where the Lord has not given me one or two souls for my hire."

In Lansingburgh, New York, where he lectured for nine days in January 1838 in the Baptist Church, a powerful effect was produced. It was estimated that at least one hundred persons who held infidel views were converted and brought to believe the Bible. Such work went on for this period of eight years, the



Miller became an evangelist and prophetic speaker; lectures mostly in NY and VT

1831 - 1839

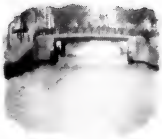


Miller was licensed as a minister

1833

1825

Erie Canal opened for traffic



1831

Nat Turner led most significant slave uprising in American history



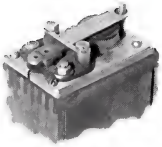
1836

Battle of The Alamo



1837

Samuel Morse patented telegraph machine



1838

"Trail of Tears" Cherokee Indians removed to OK



Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists, and in almost every place visited by Mr. Miller, backsliders were reclaimed and sinners converted. In the autumn of 1833, when Mr. Miller had reached the age of fifty-one, he was licensed as a minister of Christ by the Baptist Church of Hampton and Whitehall. During the years 1831-1839, Mr. Miller labored diligently meetings being held chiefly in Baptist churches and confined largely to the territory adjacent to eastern New York. Sinners were converted, believers edified. Practically every church where Mr. Miller lectured was blessed with a gracious revival. In the period from October 1, 1834 to June 9, 1839, he delivered *eight hundred lectures.*✞

What Prayer Posture Is Best?

Should we sit, stand, kneel, raise our arms, or face the wall?

by Miriam Snow Priebe





I dropped in at a little dollar store a few weeks ago around noon, and found that the store seemed empty. There were no other customers and, as far as I could see, no clerks either. Puzzled, I started to walk toward the back of the store, thinking that there might be a back room where an employee might be checking stock. I was startled when I came upon a man, lying flat on his face. When I realized he was praying, I backed up quietly and waited.

In a few minutes he returned to the front of the store and, without explanation or embarrassment, took his place at the check-out counter. As I drove home, I thought about how faithful the followers of Mohammed are in praying regularly. Five times a day they prostrate themselves before God. They don't do so after finding a convenient place for prayer. They pray wherever they are, and their posture during prayer reveals their awe and reverence for the Creator of the universe.



Years ago, Charles and I visited an Orthodox Christian Church in

Timosora, Romania and watched as worshippers arriving for the service prostrated themselves on a cold cement floor - not even a rug for them. They were men of all ages (The women sat with covered heads in a balcony upstairs). I wondered then about those men. Were their prayers more effective because of their prayer posture? What posture makes our petitions more powerful?

I was brought up in an Advent Christian parsonage where our family met together each morning for daily devotions. Dad read a short passage of scripture and made a few comments. As we girls grew older we sometimes shared our thoughts. For the first part of that devotional time we sat in our chairs. When the time for prayer came, we knelt by our chairs with our heads bowed and eyes closed. If we opened our eyes during that time, we looked at the back of the chair. If we were running late, we stood in a circle, joined our hands, and prayed with heads bowed and eyes closed. If we looked up during prayer we saw the others who prayed. There was no central spot to which we all looked as we prayed. At night we knelt by our beds before we went to sleep. At prayer meeting we knelt for all the prayers, which were often long.

After I was grown up, I took my mother to a large church where my husband was speaking. The colorful hangings and the gold cross on the altar were not familiar to her. Some people were already kneeling in prayer. Mom whispered to me anxiously, "Do I have to kneel?" I assured her that it was not necessary to kneel, but added; "We're kneeling to God."
"Oh," she said happily, and knelt with everyone else. I could see her lips moving in prayer. She had spent a lifetime on her knees, by bedsides, in hospitals, at private and public worship; but she never had happened to kneel where people knelt on kneelers and faced a central cross!



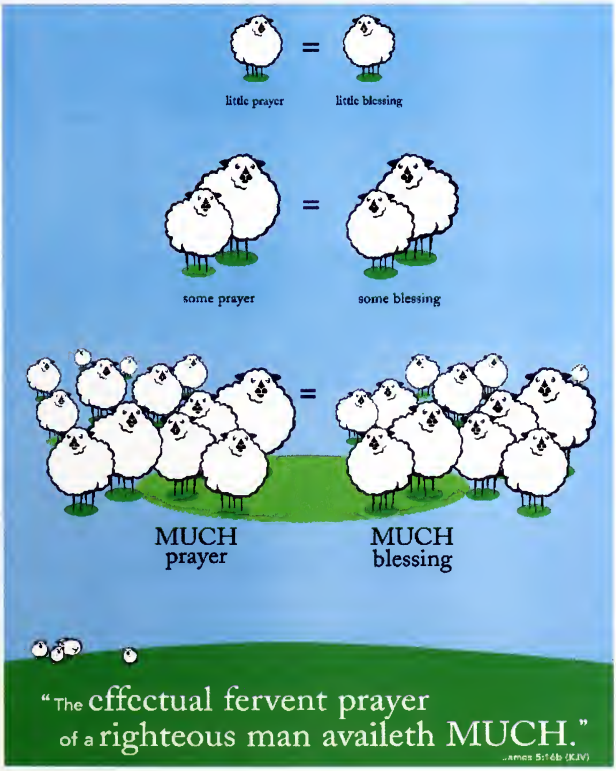
I found it very strange when I attended another church where every-

(Continued on page 25)

MUCH PRAYER—MUCH BLESSING

One Pastor's Journey from Tolerating His People to Loving Them

by Dee Duke



Jefferson Baptist Church began as a church plant in 1973 in Jefferson, Oregon, a small farming community in the Willamette Valley. My wife and I were among the founding members during the time when I was a student at Western Baptist College in Salem. I graduated in 1975 and went back to our family dairy in Washington State. Farming was the love of my life.

Nevertheless, at the end of 1976 we went back to Jefferson Baptist—with me as the pastor. I fought that move with everything in me. I loved farming and did not want to leave the farm. I was an extreme introvert, I struggled with relationships, and the whole thought of being a pastor scared me to death. But I couldn't shake the strong sense that God was calling me back to be the pastor.

There were about 25 people attending the church when we began, and in spite of my lack of experience and skill at preaching and pastoring, God

blessed us with more people and the church steadily grew. We met in the local grade-school gym until the fall of 1979, when we moved into our own building on five acres. We continued to grow, and by 1980 Jefferson Baptist had grown to about 200 people.



The eight years that followed were not good years. The church was full of disunity and financial problems. Many people left, and the ones who stayed weren't happy. I tried as hard as I knew how to be a good pastor and to do the things that would cause our church to grow. On the farm my father used to say that there wasn't anything I couldn't accomplish if I was willing to work hard enough. So every time someone left the church I would work a little harder, put in more time, and start another program. Nothing seemed to work. I continued to upset and offend people no matter what I did and no matter how hard I tried.

By the end of 1988, I was bitter and angry at God—and at most of the people I knew. I thought that because I had given up my lifelong dream of farming, God would surely bless me. I couldn't understand why God was treating me this way. I became disillusioned, weary, and depressed. I came to the conclusion that God had not really called me to ministry after all, but the dairy was sold, and I had no idea what I was going to do with my life.

Then I received a letter from Dr. Joe Aldrich, president of Multnomah Bible College, announcing that the Salem-area pastors were going to get together at the coast for the first ever "Prayer Summit." It would be four days of prayer; no agenda, no programs or speakers. Just prayer. I wasn't excited about praying for four days. It sounded boring to me, but I decided to attend. My plan was to skip the prayer times and walk on the beach, think about my life, write my letter of resignation, and try to figure out what to do next.

I went to the first prayer time just to be polite. I wasn't there for even 20 minutes when the thought entered my head that I had tried everything during the last 13 years. . . everything except prayer. I had prayed, but never had been devoted to prayer. Our church had prayer times, but they were attended by a small minority. None of it was even close to what I experienced in just twenty minutes at that Prayer Summit. For the next four days God turned me inside out. He convicted me of my prayerlessness, my independent spirit, and my belief that I could accomplish this "pastor thing" with enough work. I had never realized how arrogant I was. I knew things had to change. I started by significantly increasing my own prayer time. I had just finished reading the biography of George Muller, so I tried to model my prayer life after his. I also established prayer meetings in our church almost every night and every morning. I preached on prayer every Sunday for the next four months.

But the thing that blessed me most personally was that people started praying for me! One Sunday, I preached a sermon on the importance of praying for your pastor and asked people to make a commitment to pray for me fifteen minutes, once each month. Over one hundred people committed to do that! Each week in church, they would give me a "thumbs up" as they caught my eye, if they had prayed for me that week.



God began to change our church, and he has continued to do so over the last fifteen years. The first change was the noticeable growth of love and unity that took place. Before we started praying, the harder I tried to make us more unified, the more fighting resulted. Now we began to pray 1 Thess. 3:12: "May the Lord

cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men" (NASB). The more we prayed this, the more God answered. Shortly after I finished my sermon series on prayer, I preached a thirteen-week series on "love." Out of that our church mission statement was born:

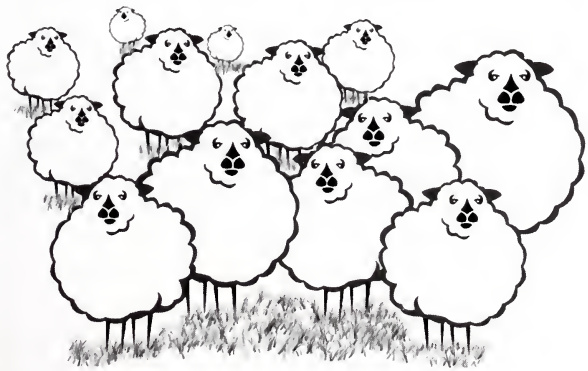
"Jefferson Baptist Church is the 'I love you' church. We are continually saying, 'I love you' to God, to each other, to the greater body of Christ, to our unsaved neighbors and friends, and to the whole world, until the whole world can say, 'I love You, God.'"

In addition, the more we prayed, the more God put his heart in us to reach the lost. We experienced a growing sense of urgency to reach our neighbors and the world. We grew in boldness and in creative ways to reach out to the lost. Almost everybody in the church began praying for lost friends, work associates, family members, mission efforts, and countries around the world.

We have identified twenty-one blessings that God has brought into our church since we devoted ourselves to the ministry of prayer. They are all wonderful blessings, but one is especially important to me personally. God has changed me. I had always loved God deeply, and I went into ministry to obey him. But I had just tolerated people. I had few relational skills and little desire to develop close relationships. For me, "loving people" had been pure duty. But when the people of Jefferson Baptist began to pray for me, God dramatically changed my heart toward the people—and he has changed their hearts toward me as well.

Today, many more are praying for me than the original one hundred. Most of them pray more than fifteen minutes a month. Many of them pray specifically for me, my family, and my ministry almost every day.

Our church motto has become: "Much prayer—much blessing, little prayer—little blessing, no prayer—no blessing." We are asking God to bless us so we can be a blessing to the world.



And, thanks to all those sheep who pray faithfully for me, I now love shepherding even more than I loved taking care of the cows on the old family farm! ✞

Changes made by Dee Duke and his church:

- Increased his own prayer time
- Established prayer meetings almost every night and every morning
- Preached on prayer every Sunday for four months
- Asked for people to commit to praying for him
- Church began praying 1 Thess. 3:12: "May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men" (NASB).

Results:

- God dramatically changed his heart toward the people of the church and theirs toward him
- The Church noticed growth of love and unity
- God put his heart in them to reach the lost
- They experienced a growing sense of urgency to reach neighbors and the world
- They grew in boldness
- They grew in creative ways to reach out to the lost

DEE DUKE is the author of *Prayer Quest: Breaking through to Your God-Given Dreams and Destiny* (*Pray!* Books © 2004, www.praymag.com). Dee and his wife, Patty, are parents to eight children.

(continued from page 5)



Keith Wheaton giving a report on his tour with the Continental Singers

From the advice of the Apostle Paul to Timothy (recorded in 2 Timothy 2:2), an adage has developed, that to most effectively make disciples we should look for those who are faithful, available and teachable. Although these traits combine to form the unfortunate acrostic "FAT," a very memorable term, I assure you that none of the persons I'm using as examples for this piece embodies the physical image that term might conjure up in your mind. But each has become a blessed learning experience for me, in part because they have characterized these three invaluable qualities: faithfulness (to the Lord and to me), availability (commitment or whatever time is necessary), and a very teachable spirit.

Keith has always asked questions. Curious people are often self-motivated learners. Our relationship was forged most significantly via countless hours of preparation and on-the-road ministry with the Northern Lights Youth Choir. Although I was his pastor throughout the year, during youth choir season Keith became my shadow. He worked very hard at helping to make the choir's ministry as effective as possible, voluntarily becoming my "right-hand man." But at the same time he was discussing (and often challenging) virtually every decision I made. For example, when the occasional inevitable disciplinary problems would arise within the group, I would often hear from Keith, "Why did you put up with that?" or "Who needs that grief? I'll tell you what I would have done…." Explanations of the importance of both firmness and grace were most readily absorbed in such difficult, yet teachable moments.



Keith and Kathy Wheaton at his ordination service in Georgia

Disciplemaking requires time together in the crucible of life, and lots of it! That investment in Keith was probably disproportionate to what was allotted to any of his peers, but it was willingly made because the hand of God and a calling to ministry were very evident in his life. As a Bible college student, Keith did a summer pastorate in a small church nearby, setting up office space in our church building so that we could interact on a daily basis. A few years later I was privileged to preach his ordination sermon, and in even more recent years we've had the special joy of working in partnership for the Advent Christian General Conference. Disciplemaking can produce bonds of friendship that enrich both ministry and life beyond description. God is good!

During those same early pastoring years in Maine, a young college student began frequenting our church, even though, clearly, church had never been a priority in his life (to put it kindly). However, he had met on campus a lovely young lady who had recently become a regular participant in our church fellowship, and was growing spiritually in a joyous and almost visible manner. While I doubt that aspirations of spiritual growth were even on the radar screen of Greg Moody's life at that time, there is no doubt



Greg Moody meeting with Dave Ross and other committee members

that Elaine Young was! And so he endured us for the sake of her (which proved to be a very wise choice).

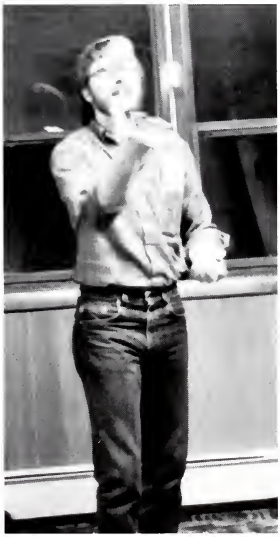
I'll never forget when Greg accepted the Lord into his life. It was during the Easter season, and the first time I served him the Lord's Supper was as part of one of the groups of twelve who gathered around our Upper Room table at the Maundy Thursday service. Elaine was fairly beaming at his side that precious evening, and she has faithfully remained by Greg's side (quite often still beaming!) through the many years since. They soon became active in assisting with our youth ministry, mentored not only by Pastor Dave, but by a couple of noteworthy youth pastors as well: Jim Gilroy and later, Bryan Lamberton.

Greg and Elaine, for several years, were active advisors with the Northern Lights Youth Choir. When a large group of young people are taken on the road for ministry, things will go wrong: things such as vehicle break-downs, epidemic sickness, broken arms and legs, mysterious ailments requiring trips to hospital emergency rooms, occasional vehicle accidents, inter-relational problems, and the constant pressure. Despite these time-consuming set-backs,



Greg and Elaine Moody on tour with the Northern Lights Choir

to arrive on time and be prepared for ministry night after night were essential. The blessings and rewards of such ministry are many, but it is through the uninvited problems and crises that the most effective disciplemaking occurs. Long hours of conversational opportunities on the bus afford an invaluable disciplemaking forum. Jesus himself strategically utilized ministry trips in the training of the twelve. Why shouldn't we? A by-product of those ministry years for us was that thirty or more of those youth choir participants dedicated their lives to full-time church-related ministry vocations.



Greg Moody entertaining youth with a juggling act

Taking note of that phenomenon, after several years (as I'm a rather

slow learner myself), I determined that I needed to be investing more intentionally in disciplemaking efforts among the adults of my pastorate. After praying about whom to disciple, on the basis of the "faithful, available, teachable" criteria, I began meeting at 6:30 a.m. one day each week with a group of four guys (of whom Greg was one). We met at a local college cafeteria, where breakfast was available (and cheap!), and devoted a year of study to such matters as personal spiritual growth, the great doctrines of Scripture, and practical matters of ministry. Within the year a couple of the guys had already assembled a group of three or four with whom they were regularly sharing what they were learning. Therein is the essence of discipleship. Shortly after I left the pastorate in Maine to serve the Advent Christian denomination, Greg was called to leave his career work with the University of Maine and become full-time Youth Pastor at the church. Today he is Senior Pastor at State Road A.C. Church, where we had lovingly invested our lives in ministry for so many years. God is good!



Peter Awute, pastor of International Pilgrims Christian Center in Charlotte, NC, and Dave Ross, pastor of Fellowship AC Church in Taylorsville, NC

In 1993 I became involved in helping a Nigerian student, studying at seminary in Charlotte, to establish the International Pilgrims Christian Center (IPCC), an Advent Christian-sponsored work targeted especially to reach the growing population of first generation immigrants from West Africa in our city. One of these immigrants with whom I formed an emotional and spiritual bond early on was Peter Awute. The night before we officially opened services in our rented storefront space, Peter and I were crawling around on our knees, hastily laying carpet for the new worship center. We have been on our knees together many times since. Peter has grown into real spiritual maturity and leadership over the years. After the planting pastor completed his seminary studies in Charlotte and moved on, Peter was called to become pastor of IPCC. We have enjoyed rich fellowship often in his home and in the various ministry sites (four, so far) of the young and "homeless" congregation.

Even after relocating from Charlotte a year ago by some eighty miles, I still continue meeting with Peter at least twice monthly to prayerfully work through the ministry needs of IPCC, but also to mentor Peter through the process toward his ordination with the Advent Christian Church. My current congregation, the Fellowship A.C. Church of Bethlehem, N.C., has entered into a growing sister church relationship with IPCC that will continually prove to be informative and rewarding for both congregations. There may be a significant cultural difference, and currently some daunting logistical problems faced by IPCC; but such circumstances also provide fertile ground for the blessings from God that come only from obedience to Christ's Great Commission: actively, intentionally, strategically making disciples for him. It is our Lord's design for the growth of his church. It is the joy of our lives! God is good! ✞

(Editorial continued)

I'll ever be recruited to play for the NBA. It could happen, but I'm pretty sure it won't, since I'm way too short and not quite NBA quality. Perhaps the chances are slightly better for randomly meeting another Advent Christian in a tiny Baptist church, but the odds are definitely against it. That's why I thought the Baptist preacher was mistaken.

ACGC has roughly 300 churches in North America. If our average church has 100 members—which is probably a generous estimate—I figured there must be only about 30,000 Advent Christians on this continent. There are more American Baptists than that in Los Angeles!

The Baptist denomination has 20 times the number of churches we have, and 50 times the number of members we have in the U.S. and Canada. Even if we were the only two denominations, the chances of meeting another Advent Christian would be 1 in 50. Throw in all the Methodists, Episcopalians, Southern Baptists, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians, and the odds become truly staggering.

So, I was sure the Baptist preacher was wrong… until I met Peggy, the Sunday School teacher. Not only was she an Advent Christian, she had also attended my and Kathy's alma mater, Berkshire Christian College. After the service, we three visited until the church doors were locked, discovering common threads in our AC experiences. As we were leaving, Peggy obliterated my already damaged statistical analysis by telling me that there were several more Advent Christians attending that little Baptist church!

Occasionally I find myself thinking like Elijah, when he complained, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant… I am the only one left…" (1 Kings 19:14). God let him know that things were not that bleak; there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal (v.18).

Sure, it's a little melodramatic, but when you're a lonely Advent Christian surrounded by multitudes of Baptists and Presbyterians, it's easy to feel isolated and unwelcome. But then I met Peggy.

Both Elijah and I (and perhaps many other Advent Christians) suffer from limited vision. We only know what we *see*. Elijah saw no other believers so he concluded he was alone. I saw only 30,000 Advent Christians (at best), so I concluded there weren't any more.

But Peggy isn't included with those 30,000 in our churches. And she isn't the only Advent Christian attending that little Baptist church. It makes me wonder how many other AC's are out there that I can't see—not to mention other Christians who've embraced the truths we hold dear, because they've read something we published, or heard one of our folks speak up for our distinctive doctrines.

"I am the only one left..."

Peggy didn't stop being an Advent Christian (even her pastor called her by that name); she just stopped living near an AC church. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15% of Americans move each year and the average American moves 11 times in his life. This means the average AC church with 100 members could experience 100% turnover in membership in seven years. (Add that to the list of reasons why your pastor may feel like resigning some Monday mornings.) Occasionally, those who move may find themselves near another AC church; however, that's very unlikely, since we only have about 300 churches in North America. But that doesn't mean they stop being "Advent Christian." Peggy didn't.

The next time you or someone you know voices a lament about the meager membership of ACGC, remember Peggy. She's proof that no one but God knows the true scope of our work. We may see only 300 AC churches with 30,000 members. But the Lord sees, and will someday show us, all the "Peggys" whose faith has been nurtured by Advent Christians, and whose lives are making a difference in his kingdom, far beyond what we can see.✞



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

"A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEW YEAR"

The dawn of a new year is upon us! While we wonder where time "goes," time keeps ticking away. Too bad we spend more time wishing and less time doing! We might realize some of our desires if we put half as much effort into perseverance as we spend complaining! The challenge we face is to make every desire God's desire, and we will find his strength to do what we are called to do.

Benjamin Franklin once remarked, "Be at war with your vices; at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man." Now *that* is indeed a great challenge, especially since it requires a determined effort on our part. That seems to be the problem, however. We don't want to put forth the effort required to make changes. Fear plays a role in this. So does the past. But we cannot forget that God is with us! We must not fail to remember that the life we live is intended to be lived to the glory of God.

Herein lies the problem. If we live for ourselves alone, then it doesn't matter whether we do the things we know we ought to do. Once we understand that we are called to live for the Lord, we will see the importance of honoring him in all our decisions. We will also know the necessity of walking with him in a deeper way with each passing year. Then our actions will line up with our desires, and we will do what most pleases the Lord, no matter how difficult it may appear.

With that challenge in mind, the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 9:10 take on added meaning. *"And those who know your name will put their trust in you; for you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you."* This New Year challenge compels us to set ministry goals and objectives which are centered in knowing, seeking, and trusting the Lord in new ways, while being faithful to the Biblical directives of our heritage. If we purpose, personally and corporately, to trust the Lord who will not forsake us, I believe the Lord will lead us into a much deeper and more exhilarating walk with himself! I believe the result will be a people and a church that are transformed! I believe the challenges we encounter and the objectives we undertake will further God's kingdom and glorify his name!

The hymn writer expressed it well in these words: "Another year of progress, Another year of praise, Another year of proving Thy presence all the days" (Frances Havergal, *Another Year Is Dawning*). May the New Year find you a "better person" as you confidently trust the Lord who never forsakes you. You are part of something great—wherever you live—because God is at work all over this world, fulfilling his eternal plan. May we as Advent Christian people say boldly, "Lord, help me trust you more!" ✞

(continued from page 16)

one *stood* for the whole service. When Charles and I visited Taize, in France, we sat on the floor along with hundreds of others. In South America we attended a service where people prayed with hands raised. I had been seated with a row of nuns. Those friendly young nuns, on my right and left, helped me to remember to raise my hands. It was a strange experience for me and a strange posture for prayer; but I prayed as they did to God, our Father, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Bible records in many places the times when people prayed in bed with their face to the wall. These were crisis times, and God really spoke to the ones who prayed. In the dark of the night, in the silence of the late hours, how many of us have turned desperately to God and felt his presence! Those "facing the wall" prayers are sometimes prayed in other positions. How many of us have prayed when driving a car with eyes open, or lying face up in a hospital bed, connected to a lot of tubes!

Our Lord Jesus Christ said," God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." So Christ really has answered the question we sometimes ask ourselves, "Is one prayer position best?" The answer of course, is "Yes. It is the *position* of the heart that counts as we call out to God our father. It is in our spirit that we must go to him, in the name of his son who is truth."

How careful we need to be when we judge others in this matter! God alone sees the heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ knows his own. God's Holy Spirit hears and helps those who want to pray effectively. How thoughtless we sometimes are as we hurriedly say grace at the table, or join carelessly with the others in a familiar prayer! In our spirits we need to be prostrated before an awe-inspiring God. In our spirits we need to be on our knees whether standing, sitting, driving, or with our faces to the wall. LORD, HELP US TO PRAY AS YOU WANT US TO PRAY!

An Invitation from Wes Ross

Hymnology Tour, 2005



At the request of friends, I have developed a 10-day itinerary of some of my favorite places, and I invite you to join me for a hymnology tour from September 30 – October 9, 2005. For several days we will see the sights in London and then travel about the countryside visiting Salisbury, Wells, Bristol, Wales, Oxford, Olney, Bedford, Cambridge, and Boston (UK). We will visit chapels where John Wesley preached, see an organ used by his brother Charles, stand at the grave of Isaac Watts, and view the cleft of a rock which inspired Augustus Toplady to write *Rock of Ages*.

Imagine visiting the home of William Cowper, entering the church where John Newton preached, and going to Bedford to visit sites related to John Bunyan. We will visit George Mueller's orphanage and see many other places important in the history of the church. Another highlight will be Sunday morning worship at All Soul's Church in London – where John Stott pastored for many years.

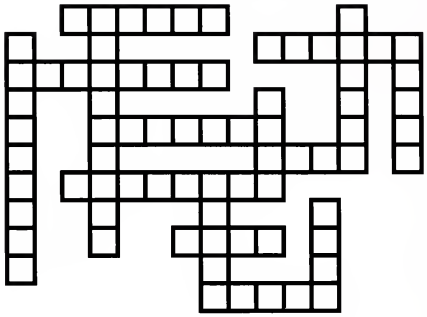
For details of the trip, including the detailed daily itinerary and financial information, you can visit the BICS website (www.berkshireinstitute.org) and click on 2005 UK Hymnology Tour or write me to receive a copy of the tour itinerary by mail. I can take 18 others with me so I hope to hear from you soon.

Wes Ross c/o BICS
PO Box 1888
Lenox, MA 01240

Tel. 413-637-4673

Fill in the crossword puzzle with the underlined words from James 5:13-16 (NIV).

"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."



BREAK the code

Replace the numbers with the correct letters. Philippians 4:6

Code:	A	B	D	E	G	H	I	K	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

3 10 9 10 15 2 4 1 9 19 7 10 16 14 1 2 10 16 15 1 9 20 15 6 7 9 5 ,

2 16 15 7 9 4 17 4 13 20 15 6 7 9 5 , 2 20 11 13 1 20 4 13 1 9 3

11 4 15 7 15 7 10 9 , 18 7 15 6 15 6 1 9 8 14 5 7 17 7 9 5 ,

11 13 4 14 4 9 15 20 10 16 13 13 4 12 16 4 14 15 14 15 10 5 10 3 .

Each word on the left will make another word when the letters are rearranged. Use the clues in the right column to help you. When you have found the new word, enter the first letter of the new word in the space that correspond to it's clue. One has been done for you.

spool	_____	H 1. rabbits
leapt	_____	__ 2. bundles of paper
there	_____	__ 3. circles
drays	_____	__ 4. appliance used to cook
greet	_____	__ 5. one more than two
share	hares	__ 6. a fold in pants or skirt
dared	_____	__ 7. smells or fragrances
doors	_____	__ 8. skilled
mares	_____	__ 9. cattle bird
votes	_____	__10. fear
taped	_____	__11. measurements of three feet

H

5 1 9 , 3 7 2 10 4 6 2 8 11 9 2

Answers: 1. hares 2. reams 3. loops 4. stove 5. three 6. pleat 7. odors 8. adept 9. egret 10. dread 11. yards



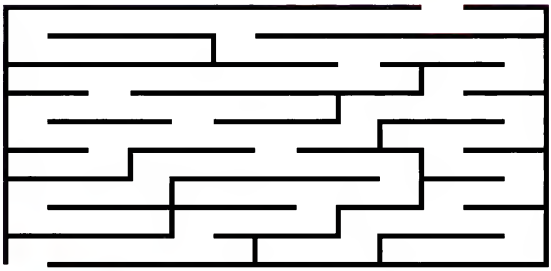
As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

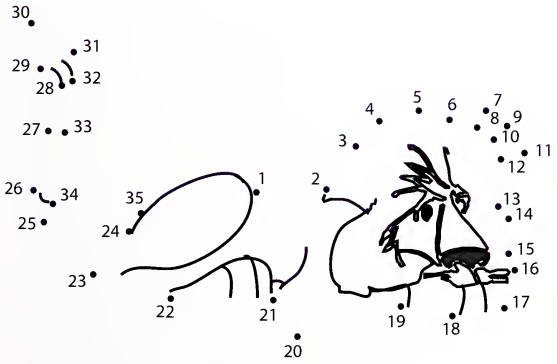


Help the boy find "the answer" to his prayer



THE ANSWER

Because Daniel prayed, God protected him from what? Daniel 6:22





INTRODUCING...

New Coordinator of Women's Ministries,

Pam Buchanan

The year was 1964, the month was November, the event was my personal entrance into God's family, and it happened at the parsonage of the First Advent Christian Church in Gadsden, Alabama. Accompanied by my dad and sitting upon my pastor's lap, we talked of the basics of the death of Jesus for my sins, of my confession and belief. I was only eight years old, so the conversation was very simple as well as the prayer that followed, but it was all that was needed for the angels to begin rejoicing over just one.

Being raised in a Christian home and connected with a loving body of believers made this seem like a very natural step, and saying "yes" that afternoon was a response leading to an adventure continuing forty years. At age eight, I surely did not understand all that was ahead, but thankfully, that is not a requirement for salvation and discipleship. I remember feeling very satisfied, and life for a normal eight-year-old proceeded on with little change, except for an inner peace resulting from my decision of obedience to follow Christ.

That first "yes" was just the beginning of many to follow, which have included attending Berkshire Christian College (1974-78) to prepare for ministry, accepting a position at the Henryville, Indiana A.C. Church as a second staff person (1978-1981), responding positively to a proposal of marriage from Rob Buchanan in 1981, and working side-by-side with Rob in several fields of location in both youth, music and senior pastorate capacities: United A.C. Church in Wilmington, North Carolina (1981-86); Mechanicsville A.C. Church in Richmond, Virginia (1987-90); Clovis A.C. Church in Clovis, New Mexico (1990-93); and in our present location of Princeton A.C. Church in Princeton, West Virginia. Rob and I have been blessed with two children who are presently both fresh-

man: one in college, the other in high school; one male, the other female; one melancholy temperament, the other sanguine…You get the picture. (Also an adventure, but that is another story for another time.)

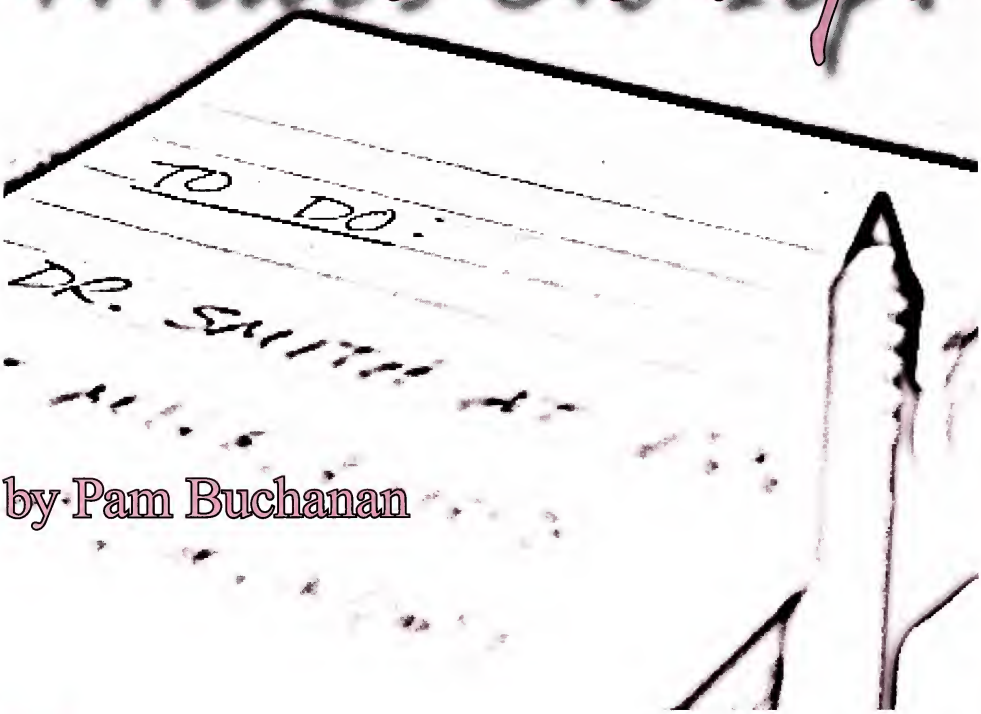
Each "yes" through the years has been accompanied by a peace that comes from obedience and the knowledge that our Lord walks beyond the "yes" with us. 2 Corinthians 3:5, which is such a comfort, reads, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." Reflecting on forty years of God's faithfulness gives me confidence to say "yes" to the position of Women's Ministry Coordinator for our denomination. I have a lifelong connection with this denomination, and I have grown to love its people and doctrine. It has been my delight through the years to be involved in WHFMS, Ladies Bible Studies, Women's Retreats, etc., and I am very grateful for all the years of mentoring and discipling this denomination has personally offered. I do not know what lies ahead, but I desire to be obedient to God's call and will excitedly walk through this open door. My prayer is that the Lord's vision will be clear, and that he will always find us faithful to respond.✞

Each "yes" in Pam's life as a Christian has been accompanied by a peace that comes from obedience to God.

Pam Buchanan, Coordinator of Women's Ministries, in her office at General Conference in Charlotte, N.C.



What's On Top?



by Pam Buchanan

Years ago, a friend gave me a pad of paper in which each page was titled, "Get It Done Today." This method of organizing my days quickly became a habit, and twenty years later, I am still reproducing this idea. I am never far from my "To Do List." I love keeping a list because I seem to accomplish more tasks during any one given day, and I have even been known to add a "done" task to the list afterwards just for the joy of crossing it off. There are many positives in keeping a list, such as remembering appointments for myself and other family members, jogging my memory on long-term commitments, and remembering even simple household chores, such as which day the trash is picked up. But through the years I have discovered this list can be all-consuming at times. If one is not careful, it begins to "take over" since the list is never done.

This brings me to the subject of prayer. When a person operates on "a list," sometimes the "sweet hour of prayer" can be a battle and reduced to minutes at best. I believe that our Father loves hearing from us anytime, and we are commanded to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Through the years, I have become very accustomed to "arrow" praying, shooting up prayers throughout the day in bits and pieces of conversation. But I also believe that our enemy, Satan, knows the power of our earnest, more extended times before our Father's throne and is in the business of doing all he can to keep us "in the

kitchen," busy and often bothered rather than "sitting at his feet" in worship. There is a time and a place for both, and as Christians we need to find the "balance." The word tells us to "make the most of every opportunity for the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16), and "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10). But the word also tells us to "Be still and know that he is God" (Ps. 46:10), and "Enter into your closet and shut the door" (Matt. 6:6). Finding the "balance" is a life goal, and because I am a "doer" by nature, the "work in the kitchen" comes much more natural than "sitting at his feet." However, the Lord continues to teach and speak, and such was a day last fall I will never forget.

Prayer needs to be at the top of the list and never marked off.

My teenage daughter was having a difficult week in school with a particular group assignment from a substitute teacher. In essence, the problem was in understanding the details, for no one in the group seemed to know for sure when it was due, how long it needed to be, whether it needed to be typed or not, etc. This was frustrating for some of the parents, so I volunteered to call the school and try to "clarify" the assignment. In doing so, I made matters worse because the substitute teacher felt threatened in her position and proceeded to single my daughter out (poor child, she was not even aware that I had called). By the end of the week, every student had a note sent home for parents to sign stating the nature of the assignment (at least we finally knew), and that the students had been sufficiently informed. My daughter brought her paper home, we discussed it, and she promptly asked for my signature. I was happy to give it, hoping that would put an end to the incident.

The next day was Friday, and "my list" alerted me to the fact that I had a precious free hour in the morning. I decided I would spend that time in prayer for my daughter, other burdens on my heart, and some extended time in worship and the word. Before I sat down, I was reminded of all the "other things" that could be accomplished (and marked off) if I just "kept going." When I smiled and said, "No thank you, Mr. Enemy," I felt a little victory and proceeded to the living room recliner. Just as I was about to sit down, I was prompted by another thought, "As soon as I sit down and began to worship, the phone is sure to ring." So I felt Victory #2 when I removed the receiver. The enemy has ways of *interrupting* us if he is unsuccessful at *distracting* us. I was feeling very encouraged as I began to pray, and it was a delightful hour, very needed, with many benefits that continued all day long. When I finished and placed the phone back on the hook, it was not long before I heard the ring. It was my husband from the office telling me the principal at the school had tried to call. Since he received a busy signal at home, he called my husband and left a message…something about my daughter needing a signed paper she had left at home. At that moment, I imagined the enemy's taunting, "See? You took the phone off the hook, and your daughter needed you. Now don't you feel mega-guilty? That was not a wise thing to do," etc., etc. Just as I was beginning to react exactly how Satan would desire, I became aware of a still, small whisper deep within my spirit, "Your daughter needed you sitting in that recliner talking to me more than she needed that signed paper at school." At that moment, the light bulb went on, and the turmoil within ceased. I knew it to be the truth, and Victory #3 was mine. By the way, I was able to make it to school with her signed paper before the class period ended, and all was well.

I learned so much that day. I will continue to operate with a "list" because it keeps me "on task," but I have come to realize that time spent in prayer, long or short, is the most important "doing" of all. Prayer needs to be at the top of the list and **never** marked off.✞

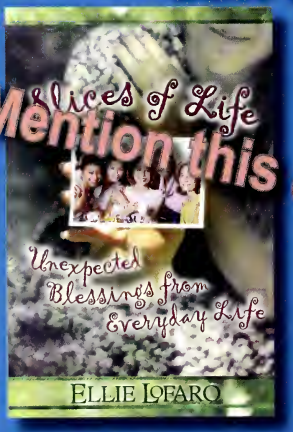


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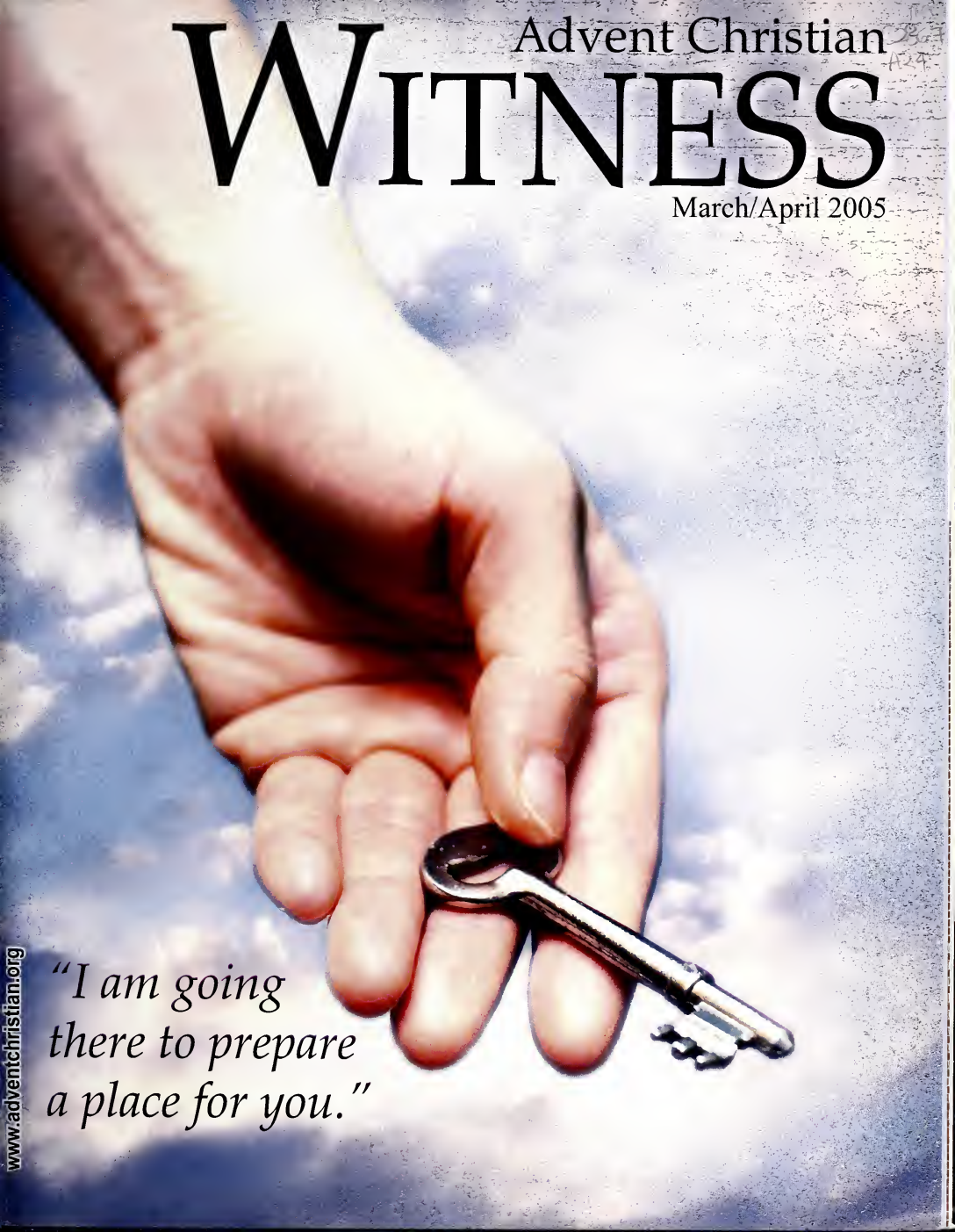
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Guest Editorial



By Rev. Joe Pritchett

After thirty years of being a Christian, roughly 20 years of that spent in professional ministry, I have learned a number of things about evangelism. Now I don't claim to be an expert by any stretch of the imagination, but I have expended a great deal of time and energy in the study and practice of sharing my faith in Christ with others.

My background with this most essential Christian responsibility includes a full-fledged Bible college course. I have also studied (and attempted to use!): Evangelism Explosion, the Four Spiritual Laws, the Roman Road and various degrees of Sonlife training. At one point, several friends and I committed over 60 key verses to memory to share in presenting the gospel. But in all of this, perhaps the most practical lesson I learned about evangelism was from a door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman.

My wife, Robin, and I were living in a rental house and were in the process of looking for our own home. One late afternoon just before Christmas, a young lady came to our door asking if she might come in and demonstrate her impressive, nationally known, vacuum cleaner. As Robin was about to send her away, it was apparent that she had no vehicle and it was quite cold. The young lady remarked that she had been dropped off, but her ride would be back soon. Even if we did not want to purchase the vacuum, she would get $5 from her employer just for getting inside our door, and she really needed the money for her children here at Christmas. My wife looked back over her shoulder to see that the "Ebenezer Scrooge meets the Grinch" expression on my face had melted a bit, so she allowed the saleslady to enter.

(Continued on page 30)

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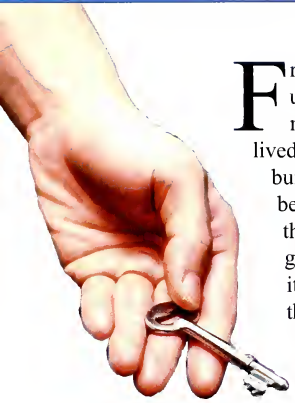
ner's
ouse

By Dr. John H. Roller

"What kind of house did you grow up in?"

I've asked that question of many of my Advent Christian friends. Not counting the ones who joined the Advent Christian Church later in life (though, indeed, many of those gave the same answer), nearly all of the born-and-raised Advent Christians that I've talked to gave the same answer! It was a single-family house. Coming in the front door, you would enter a front room where casual visiting might take place. Further in, there would be a kitchen, a dining room, a large living room, two or three (or maybe even four or five) bedrooms, perhaps a den, one or two (or maybe several) bathrooms, a garage for parking the car, and an attic (or basement) for storing stuff. This house would comprise about 1,000 to 3,000 square feet (depending on the family's income level) and sit on a property between ¼ of an acre and a few acres (or more) of land. It would be occupied by the person I was talking to, their brother(s) and sister(s)—if they had any—and their parents, possibly also a grandparent or two, maybe even one or two other relatives or non-relatives.

On either side of the house, and up and down the street, there would be other similar houses sitting on similar-sized properties and occupied by similar families. In over 95% of the cases, this neighborhood would be located in a suburban community, in a small town (demographers define that as a community with fewer than 25,000 residents), or in a rural area. For those Advent Christians who grew up in farming families—and there are thousands of you out there!—such a house is now referred to as "the old home place." Some of you still live there. My story is quite different. You see, I'm a city kid.



From the time I was born until a few weeks before my thirteenth birthday I lived in a series of apartment buildings. The one I remember best was built during the year I was in kindergarten. When I first saw it, it was a very large hole in the ground, surrounded by a construction fence. Gradually, it grew to a height of six stories (about 120 feet), then it opened to occupants, and we were among the first families to move in.

Our apartment (called 1P) was on the ground floor. You enter the building either by having a key or by pressing a buzzer with the apartment number you want to visit, conversing briefly with the people in the apartment, then waiting for them to press a button that will unlock the door for a few seconds (or you can cheat, and just wait for someone to exit the building, then grab the door from them before it closes). You walk up the hall, passing several other apartments, till you come to 1P. You can then enter our apartment just as anyone else might enter a single-family house.

Once inside, there was a small foyer area, a large living room, one bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a small room my father used as his study (it was really not much bigger than a walk-in closet). The total area of this apartment was about 500 square feet. It was "the old home place" to me, my sister, my parents, and (later) my baby brother. There were nineteen other nearly identical apartments on the floor we lived on, and twenty more on each of the five floors above us (my sister's best friend, Marcy Berman, lived directly above us, five stories up, in 6P, which was exactly identical to 1P).

One hundred and twenty families—about 500 people in all—lived in this building, which occupied less than a single acre of land, located at 142-30 Sanford Avenue, next door to the First Baptist Church. Within a one-mile radius of this home there were over 100 similar buildings (and, yes, even a few single-family houses scattered among them). Together, the people living in them made up the community of Flushing, with a population (then, as now) of about 70,000. Flushing was one of about two dozen such communities that comprised the Borough of Queens, the largest and most heavily populated of the five boroughs that constituted New York City. At the time, New York was the biggest city in the world, with a population of nearly eight million—not counting another twelve million who lived in its suburbs in a three-state metropolitan area. My "home town."

In John 14:2, Jesus told his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions." Did it ever occur to you to ask, "How can there be 'mansions' *inside* a 'house'?" It's just possible that my experiences as a child might help you get an idea of what Jesus might have meant.

I realize, of course, that most modern versions translate his statement as, "In my Father's house are many *rooms*" (rather than *"mansions"*)—precisely, I think, because the translators aren't seeing my Father's "house" the way I do!

The Greek word "monai" literally means "dwelling places." Are you looking forward to an eternal "dwelling place" that can be called only a "room?" Not I! I'd rather have an old-fashioned "mansion!" And I think there's a way that I can.

I see my Father's "house" as a single, gigantic apartment building. Like the one I was raised in, it has many stories, or floors. On each floor there are many similar-sized, similar-shaped apartments. There are, of course, hallways to walk in, to get from one apartment to another. There is a front entrance that you can only get through by "buzzing" the person you've come to see—in this case, my Father. Some people refer to the entrance as "the Pearly Gate(s)."

The picture, of course, is drawn from Revelation 21:10-16, where the Apostle John reports seeing a vision of "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God… And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

The length and the breadth *and the height*! The "city" is in the shape of a cube, twelve thousand furlongs east-to-west, twelve thousand furlongs north-to-south, *and twelve thousand furlongs from the bottom of the ground floor to the roof.* About the same shape as my "home" at 142-30 Sanford Avenue, in Flushing. But what about its size?

The Greek word translated "furlong" is "stadion" (in the singular); "stadia" (in the plural). Twelve thousand stadia in length, twelve thousand stadia in breadth, and twelve thousand stadia in height. Suppose each "story" consisted of a number of apartments, rectangular in shape, two stadia in length, three stadia in breadth, and one stadion from floor to ceiling. Six square stadia of floor space, six cubic stadia of total volume. Suppose, further, that the apartments themselves only took up ½ of the total volume of the building—the other half being occupied by hallways, stairways, elevators, insulation, and room for wiring, plumbing, etc. How many stories would the building have? How many apartments on each floor? How many people could live in a building that size?



12,000 x 12,000 x 12,000 = 1,728,000,000,000 cubic stadia of total volume.
½ x 1,728,000,000,000 = 864,000,000,000 cubic stadia occupied by apartments.
1/6 x 864,000,000,000 = 144,000,000,000 apartments.
More than enough for every human being who has ever lived to have his or her own apartment!

Please note: I'm not saying that every human being who has ever lived is going to be saved. Jesus said, "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). What I'm saying is that there could be enough apartments in the holy Jerusalem for every person who has ever lived to have his or her own apartment if s/he were willing to receive it.

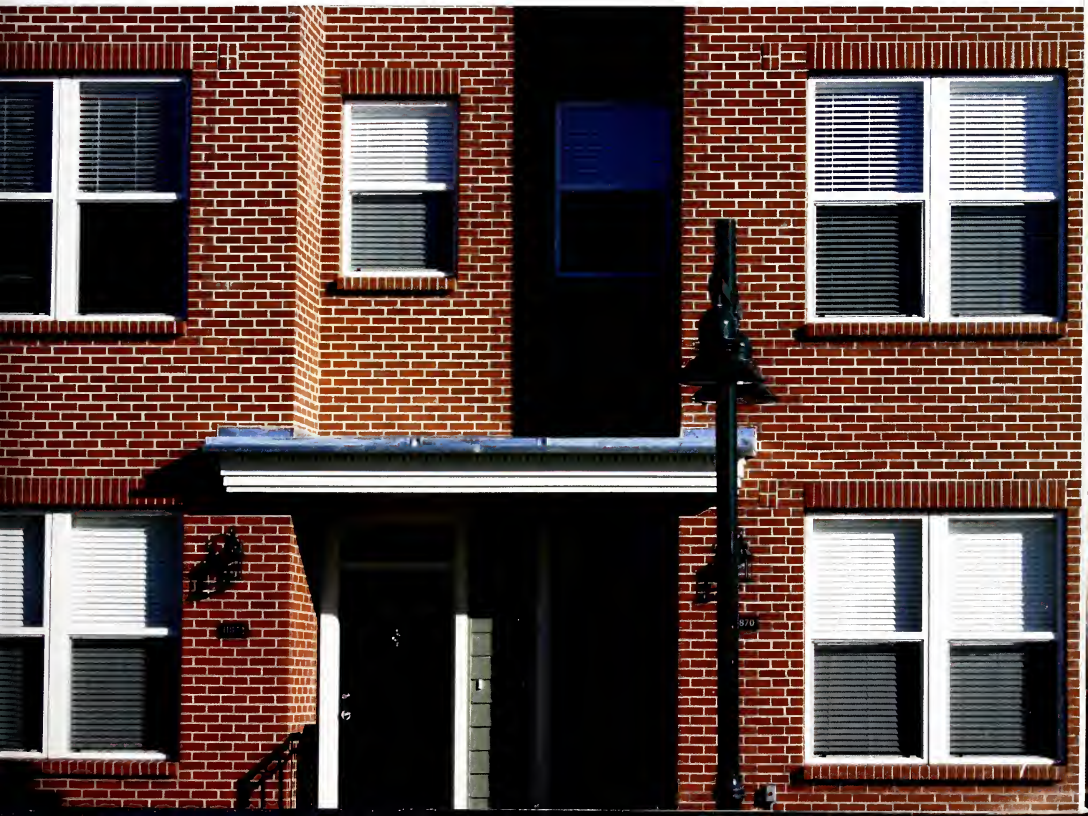
It's a "secure" building, like the one I grew up in, in New York, with one difference: you can't cheat and get in by grabbing the door when someone else leaves. It doesn't work that way. JESUS is the Door (John 10:7) and you can only get in if he lets you in (John 14:6).

But where do the "mansions" come in?

The answer to that is found in the definition of a stadion. According to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by Dr. Joseph Henry Thayer (published by Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on April 10, 1889) a stadion is "a measure of length comprising 600 Greek feet, or 625 Roman feet, or 125 Roman paces, hence 1/8 of a Roman mile [i.e. 606.75 English feet (about 195 meters)]."

My "apartment" has a floor space of 2,208,873 square feet, and a ceiling height of 606 feet and 9 inches! So does yours. That is FAR BIGGER than the Bill & Melinda Gates "mansion" in Seattle, Washington—the largest "single-family" home in America!

Suddenly, the question isn't, "Is there room enough for every





person who has ever been saved to have a 'mansion' in our Father's house?" It is, "What am I going to do with all that space?!" The entire apartment building I grew up in could easily be placed in one corner of my eternal apartment; its roof would only reach 1/5 of the way to the ceiling of the apartment, and it would only consume about 1% of the apartment's floor space. You would hardly notice it was there unless you were looking for it.

Revelation 22:2 informs us that "the tree of life" grows in the city, yielding "twelve manner of fruits" year round. There's enough room in my apartment for an entire acre of fruit trees (an acre is only 43,560 square feet; I've got about 50 acres of floor space to fill). Hey, the ceiling is high enough that I could fill a box 200 feet deep with California soil and grow redwood trees in it (they only grow to a height of 350 feet and don't require half that depth of soil; there would still be 50 feet of air space above the tops of the trees for my pet eagles to soar in).

Revelation 22:2 also mentions a river. Most rivers aren't more than one or two hundred feet wide. That river could run right through the middle of my apartment and it would use up less than ten percent of the total floor space! Ezekiel 47:9-10, describing the very same place, refers to "a very great multitude of fish" and "a place to spread forth nets" (the kind that are used for catching fish to be eaten.) I know people with resurrected, immortal bodies can eat fish, because that's what Jesus ate after he rose (Luke 24:42-43 and John 21:9ff.). There are also numerous references to bread, and wine, and other dietary staples in the passages that describe my Father's house. I can believe that every kind of food that exists will be available there, because Jesus "declared all foods clean" according to Mark 7:19 (NIV) and Acts 10:9-16 (see, especially, verse 15).

Growing up in Flushing, it was difficult to play much of anything in the apartment, except checkers and Monopoly. If I tried to play catch with my sister, I'd probably break something and be punished. We could, of course, go outdoors if the weather were nice. We were fortunate enough to live right across the street from Public School #20 (where we spent many dreary days studying reading, writing, math, and social studies). I say "fortunate" because P.S. 20 also had a great big playground! There were sandboxes for the littlest kids, swing sets and jungle gyms for the slightly larger ones, even two handball courts where a game similar to racquetball (or "squash") could be played by those high enough in the grade-school pecking order to qualify (the rest of us could play handball on rainy days if we didn't mind getting wet). It also had a full-sized baseball diamond complete with bleacher seats and a backstop! And, of course, the ubiquitous half-courts for the basketball games



that were the favorite of the taller kids. Football is a "country" sport not particularly favored in the Borough of Queens. But there's enough room in my Father's house for each and every apartment to have its own full-sized football stadium: it would only consume about 20% of the floor space that remains after putting in the mansion, the tree-of-life orchard, the redwood "forest", the river, the bakery, the vineyard, the sandboxes, the swing sets, the jungle gyms, the handball courts, the baseball diamond, and the full-sized basketball courts. We still haven't accounted for more than three of the six square stadia of floor space in this single-person apartment.

I don't know what you would do with all of your 50 acres. Maybe you want a single-story farmhouse with a barnyard, a chicken coop, a pond, and forty acres of "fruited plain." There's certainly enough room for that. Maybe you don't like the idea of living alone, and would prefer that eight or ten of your closest friends and relatives could "pool" their apartment space and create a "mansion" with almost an entire square mile of floor space. That would work. I can't imagine my Father's house being so structured and stereotyped that every apartment is the same size and shape, the way Marcy's (6P) was the same as ours (1P). He's a God of infinite diversity and variety! So yours won't be the same as mine but, whatever it is, it'll be big enough and good enough. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

There's only one point that brings me sadness as I contemplate what the Bible teaches me about eternity. It's the stunning fact that most of the 144,000,000,000 "mansions" that there could be, would be uninhabited. Billy Graham (who should know as much about this subject as anyone now living does) estimates that only ten percent of the people who have ever lived have responded in faith to Jesus' offer of salvation and eternal life. Thinking about what the future holds for me—undeserving as I am—makes me wonder how any one of them could possibly reject such an offer. Is human nature so ruined, so sinful, that most people purposely choose a few years of "the pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25) rather than "signing a lease" for eternity in my Father's house?

Or could it simply be that no one has told them what's available? And whose job would that be? ✞

Dr. John Roller serves as director of urban and ethnic ministries and is coordinator of resources at Advent Christian General Conference.

Our History

William Miller and the Early Phases of the Advent Movement

Part 2

Address delivered at the biennial meeting of the Advent Christian General Conference, June 26, 1932, Campground, Plainville, Connecticut

by Orrin Roe Jenks

Period from 1839-1844

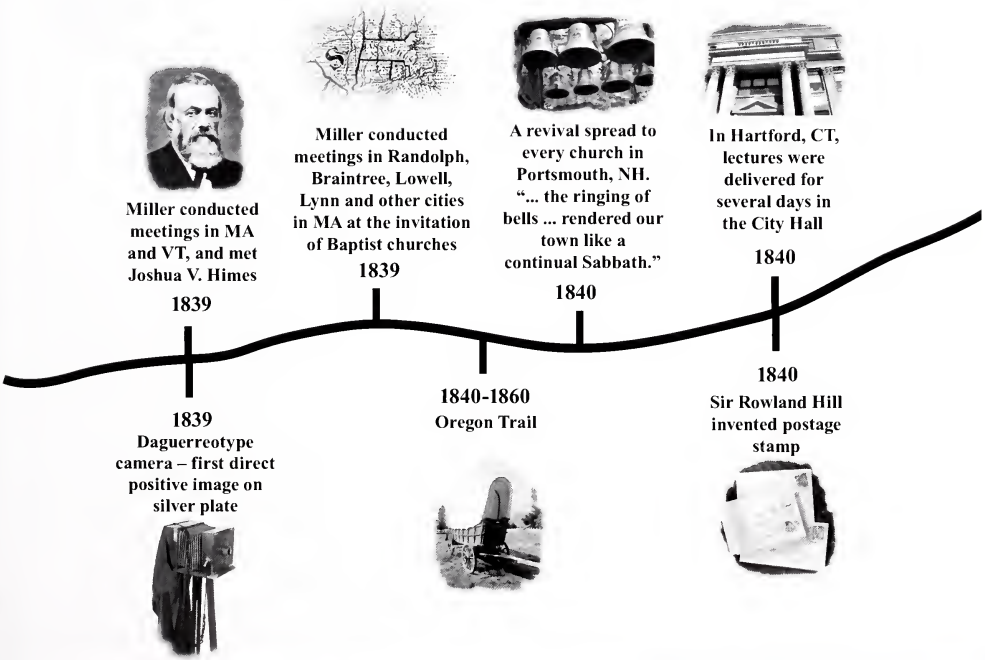
In the year 1839, upon invitation of Baptist churches in Massachusetts, Mr. Miller visited that state and conducted meetings in Randolph, Braintree, Lowell, Lynn, and other cities. In November 1839, while lecturing in Exeter, New Hampshire, Mr. Miller met Joshua V. Himes of the "Christian Connection," who was pastor of the Chardon Street Church in Boston. Mr. Himes secured Mr. Miller to deliver lectures in the church, which he did December 8-16, 1839, to crowded houses, many being unable to gain admittance.

This meeting of these two men, Miller and Himes, marks a new and important period in the life and work of Mr. Miller. Joshua V. Himes really became the publicity man for Mr. Miller. He proposed the use of the press. Five thousand copies of Miller's lectures were printed and distributed. A paper was started. The *Signs of the Times* was issued early in 1840. This was published for about four years, and then continued for many years as the *Advent Herald.*

This period from 1840 to 1844 was marked by great gatherings. A glance at a few may indicate their scope.

In January 1840, Miller visited Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and lectured in the Christian Church. A revival started during the meetings and continued after Miller left, and this revival spread to every church in Portsmouth that believed in revivals. The report reads:

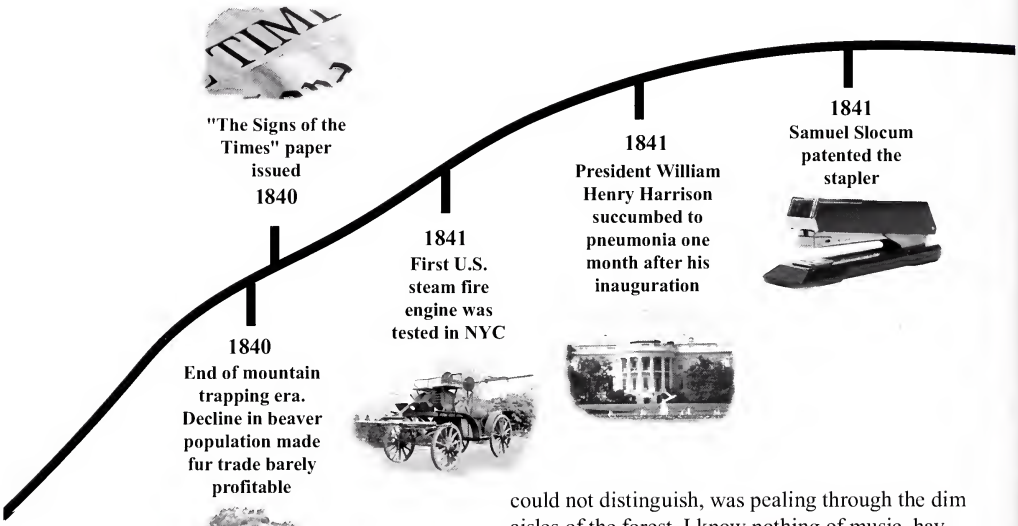
"Our meetings continued every day and evening. Not infrequently from sixty to seventy would come forward for prayers on an evening. Such an awful spirit of solemnity seemed to settle down on the place that hard must be that sinner's heart that could withstand it. Yet … not an appearance of confusion occurred, all was order and solemnity … For weeks together, the ringing of bells, for daily meetings, rendered our town like a continual Sabbath. Such a season of revival was never witnessed before in Portsmouth by the oldest inhabitant. The number of conversions is variously estimated at from five to



seven hundred."

At Portland, a revival followed the Miller lectures. Take these items from the report of the meetings: "A number of rum-sellers have turned their shops into meeting-rooms. One or two gambling establishments are entirely broken up. Infidels, Deists, Universalists, and the most abandoned profligates have been converted."

In Hartford, Connecticut, lectures were delivered for several days in the City Hall, where from fifteen hundred to two thousand persons were in attendance every evening. Several hundred people became favorable to the adventual views.



Campmeetings

In June and early July 1842, the first campmeeting connected with the movement was held in East Kingstone, New Hampshire, with some congregations estimated as high as seven to ten thousand people. This was the meeting which the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, attended for one service, and of which he wrote as follows:

"Three or four years ago … I spent an hour or two at a campground of the Second Advent in East Kingston. The spot was well chosen. A tall growth of pine and hemlock threw its melancholy shadow over the multitude, who were arranged upon rough seats of boards and logs. Several hundred—perhaps a thousand—people were present, and more were rapidly coming. Drawn about in a circle, forming a background of snowy whiteness to the dark masses of men and foliage, were the white tents, and back of them the provision stalls and cook shops. When I reached the ground, a hymn, the words of which I could not distinguish, was pealing through the dim aisles of the forest. I know nothing of music, having neither ear nor taste for it—but I could readily see that it had its effect upon the multitude before me, kindling to higher intensity their already excited enthusiasm. The preachers were placed in a rude pulpit of rough boards, carpeted only by the dead forest leaves and flowers, and tasseled, not with silk and velvet, but with the green boughs of the somber hemlocks around it. One of them followed the music in an earnest exhortation on the duty of preparing for the great event …

"To an imaginative mind the scene was full of novel interest. The white circle of tents; the dim

wood arches, the upturned, earnest faces; the loud voices of the speakers, burdened with the awful symbolic language of the Bible; the smoke from the fires rising like incense from forest altars; carrying one back to the days of primitive worship when

'The groves were God's first temples, ere men learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And stretch the roof above it.'"

From this date, campmeetings became one of the big agencies for promulgating the message. A great tent was purchased and pitched by Joshua V. Himes in the city centers, and thus many thousands were reached who might not have entered the churches.

reached with the message of the nearness of the Advent.

During this period Joshua V. Himes, aside from preaching and lecturing, started and maintained a numbers of papers. *The Signs of the Times* was published in Boston, *The Midnight Cry* in New York, *The Western Midnight Cry* in Cincinnati. Towards the close of the period *The Midnight Cry* was published in New York as a daily.

Mr. Miller looked for the Lord not later than the spring of 1844. This date came and went without



First campmeeting connected with the movement held in NH. Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier attended this meeting.

1842
Seminole Indians moved to Indian Territory



1842
State of MA passed law that limited children under 12 working in factories to 10- hour workdays



1842
Webster-Ashburton Treaty defined Canadian-US border



1842
Lt. John C. Fremont of the Army Topographical Corps leads scientific expedition into Rocky Mountains, guided by mountain man, Kit Carson



From January 21-29, 1843, Mr. Miller lectured in Philadelphia in the large hall of the Chinese Museum, which was crowded to such an extent that the owners became alarmed for the safety of the hall, and asked that the meetings be closed. At the last meeting in the afternoon, to quote the words of Bliss: "Probably more than a thousand persons arose to testify their faith in the truth of the Advent near, and three or four hundred of the unconverted arose to request an interest in his prayers."

Thus the work went on until such cities as Albany, New York; Providence, Rhode Island; Worcester, Massachusetts; and Washington, D.C., had been

bringing the expected end. Great was the disappointment. On the second day of May 1844, Mr. Miller wrote as follows:

"To Second Advent Believers: Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man, I should have to do as I have done. Although opposers said it would not come, they produced no weighty arguments. It was evidently guess-work with them; and

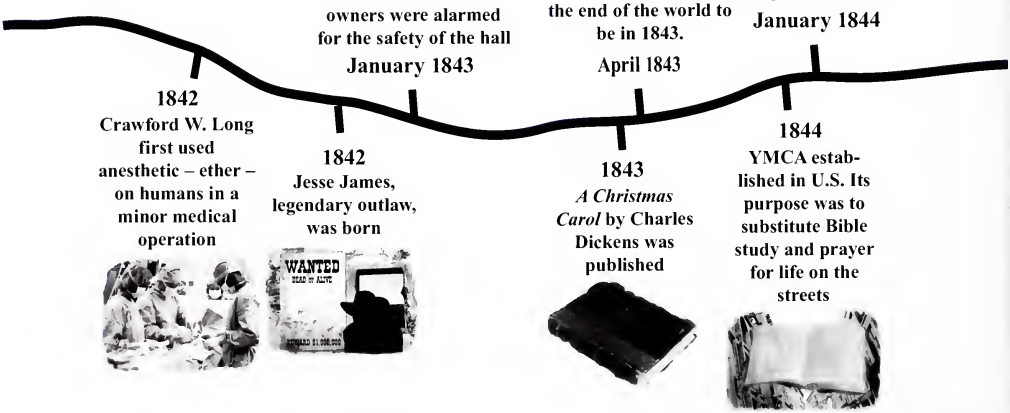
I then thought, and do now, that their denial was based more on an unwillingness for the Lord to come than on any argument leading to such a conclusion.

"I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful, and not let that day come upon you unawares. The wicked, the proud, and the bigot will exult over us. I will try to be patient. God will deliver the godly out of temptation, and will reserve the unjust to be punished at Christ's appearing."

The summer of 1844 was spent by Miller, Himes, Litch, and others in preaching, chiefly to encourage the believers to cling to their hope of the soon-coming of the Lord.

About the middle of the summer—the month of July—S. S. Snow, who had been converted from infidel views about four years before, began to advocate that the "tenth day of the seventh month," the Day of Atonement under the law of Moses, was the day on which the Lord would come. According to the reckoning of the Caraite Jews, this day, in the year 1844, would fall on the twenty-second of October. Thus October 22, 1844, became a date of importance. Mr. Miller and those who sympathized with him did not accept this date. But gradually as the weeks went by, many came to favor it, and at the beginning of autumn its acceptance spread like a prairie fire until the majority of the believers set their hopes on this day. This is known as the "tenth day of the seventh month movement." On October 6, Mr. Miller was first led to favor that date, and on the eleventh day of October he published in *The Signs of the Times* the following:

"I think I have never seen among our brethren such faith as is manifested in the seventh month. 'He will come,' is the common expression. 'He will not tarry the second time,' is their general reply. There is a forsaking of the world, an unconcern for the wants



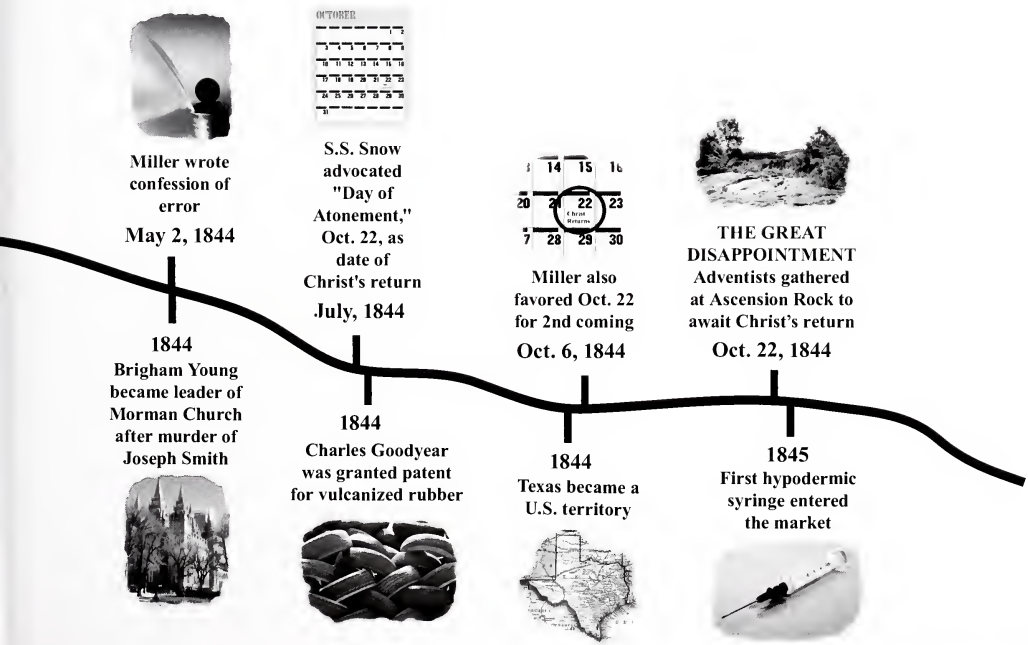
of life, a general searching of heart, confession of sin and a deep feeling in prayer for Christ to come. A preparation of heart to meet him seems to be the labor of their agonizing spirits. There is something in this present waking up different from anything I have ever before seen … Our meetings are all occupied with prayer, and exhortation to love and obedience. The general expression is, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

October 22, 1844, passed without the coming of the Lord. The disappointment was great, more so than in the spring of 1844. There came then a period of confusion, of uncertainty, and of disorganization—a period which requires a special study by itself, and which it is not within the province of this address to discuss.

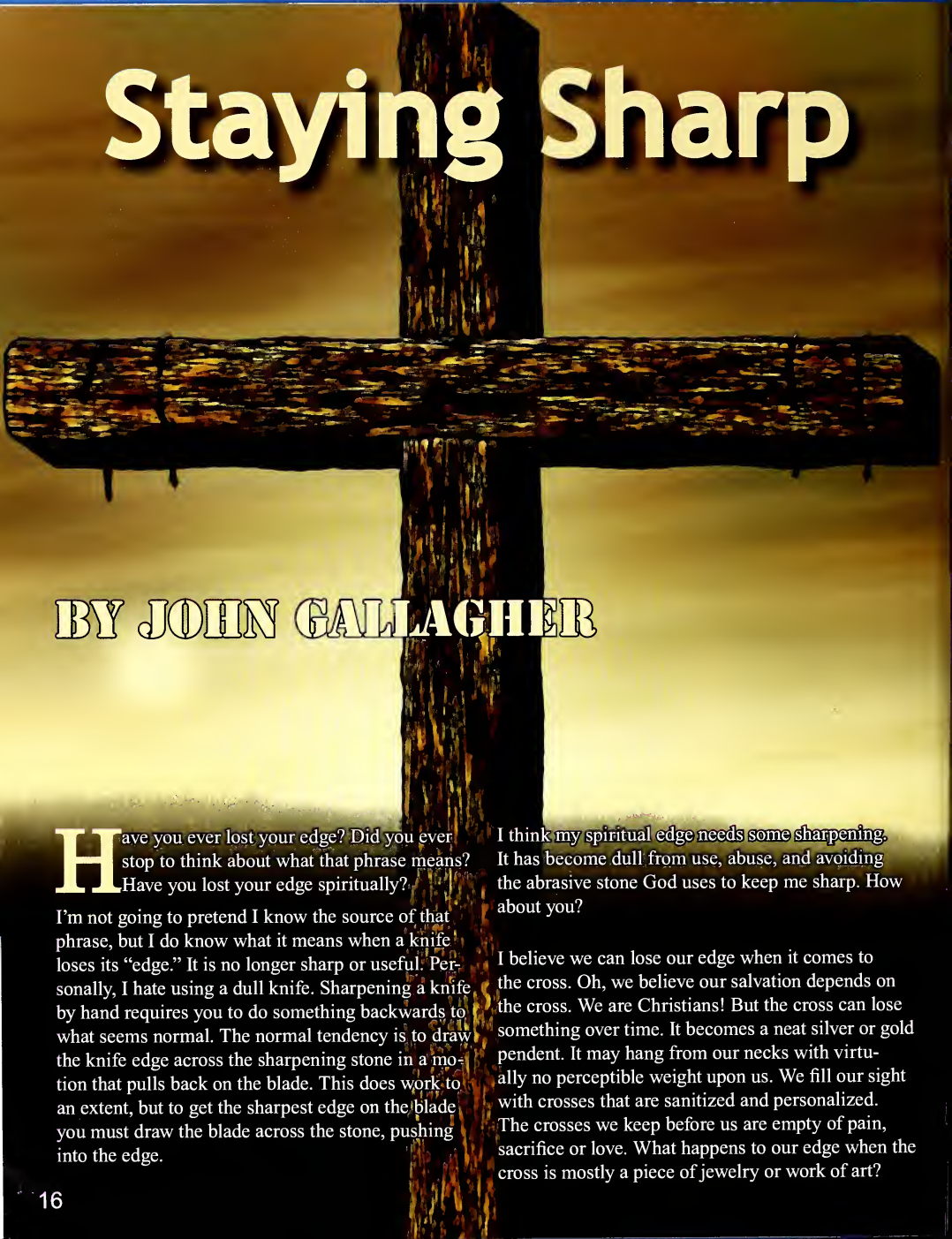
Mr. Miller kept his balance, and so far as possible, considering the condition of his health, continued to preach and write, and thus help the thousands of followers who had accepted his views. On the tenth of November 1844, he wrote to Himes from his home in Low Hampton:

"Dear Brother Himes: I have been waiting and looking for the blessed hope, in expectation of realizing the glorious things which God has spoken of Zion. Yes, and although I have been twice disappointed, I am not yet cast down or discouraged. God has been with me in spirit, and has comforted me. I have now much more evidence that I do believe in God's Word. My mind is perfectly calm, and my hope in the coming of Christ is as strong as ever …

"Our duty now is to comfort one another with the words of Christ's coming, to strengthen those who are weak among us, to establish the wavering, and to raise up the bowed down, speaking often one to another. Let our conversation be in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior; for the time has not come for us to live by faith, a faith that is tried like gold seven times purified." ✞



Staying Sharp



BY JOHN GALLAGHER

Have you ever lost your edge? Did you ever stop to think about what that phrase means? Have you lost your edge spiritually?

I'm not going to pretend I know the source of that phrase, but I do know what it means when a knife loses its "edge." It is no longer sharp or useful. Personally, I hate using a dull knife. Sharpening a knife by hand requires you to do something backwards to what seems normal. The normal tendency is to draw the knife edge across the sharpening stone in a motion that pulls back on the blade. This does work to an extent, but to get the sharpest edge on the blade you must draw the blade across the stone, pushing into the edge.

I think my spiritual edge needs some sharpening. It has become dull from use, abuse, and avoiding the abrasive stone God uses to keep me sharp. How about you?

I believe we can lose our edge when it comes to the cross. Oh, we believe our salvation depends on the cross. We are Christians! But the cross can lose something over time. It becomes a neat silver or gold pendent. It may hang from our necks with virtually no perceptible weight upon us. We fill our sight with crosses that are sanitized and personalized. The crosses we keep before us are empty of pain, sacrifice or love. What happens to our edge when the cross is mostly a piece of jewelry or work of art?

"The Cross is my sharpening stone"

- It keeps my spiritual edge sharp
  Jesus endured physical, emotional and spiritual pain
  Jesus learned what sin was by bearing mine (and yours)
- It was a place of death for Jesus
  Jesus submitted completely to his father
  Jesus gave up his life willingly out of love
- It is the defining picture for my life
  I'm called to die to self
  I'm called to a life of sacrifice and suffering
  I'm called to a life of finding forgiveness and forgiving others

The cross is my sharpening stone. It keeps my spiritual edge sharp. But it can't be a pretty cross.

My salvation, forgiveness, freedom, and acceptance before God depend on a cross of suffering and torture. Jesus suffered on the cross for me. He endured great physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. Jesus learned what sin was by bearing mine (and yours) on the cross to incur God's wrath in my place.

The cross is my sharpening stone because the cross was a place of death for Jesus. On that cross he submitted completely to his father. On that cross he gave up his life willingly out of love for me, for you, for his father.

The cross is my sharpening stone because the cross is the defining picture for my life. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Part of me doesn't want to go through this sharpening process for it calls me to the life of the cross. I'm called to die to self—willingly, lovingly, completely. I'm called to a life of sacrifice and suffering (though I know this ultimately brings victory as it did for Jesus).

I'm called to a life of the cross. It is not pretty or sanitized. I'm called to a life of finding forgiveness through the cross and forgiving others no matter what they have done or the weight it places on me. You see, I have a cross to carry—daily.

Galatians 2:20 defines this cross-life in these terms, "I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Wow, "I no longer live ..." I don't remember hearing that in any commercials lately! Staying sharp means coming again and again to the cross, his and mine. ✞

Rev. John Gallagher is pastor of the Ossipee Valley Bible Church (AC), Ossipee, N.H.



Jody Crimi

She found herself crossing the North American Continent on a

Bike 4 Christ

By Jody Crimi

One Sunday after church a friend handed my husband, Dave, a book. It was a book about someone's adventure biking across the United States. Dave and our friend, Tom, discovered they shared the same dream. They discussed the dream for a long time and, finally, last spring, started making serious plans because they had a window of opportunity to do it. More people became involved and a team of riders and a support crew started coming together. I would be one of a few that would provide support along the way. The support staff would drive the vehicles, cook, set up and tear down camp, do laundry, grocery shop, and anything else that was needed. Since everyone would be paying his own way, we wanted to keep costs down. We planned to stay mostly at RV parks. Some would camp in tents and some would sleep in the old seventies motor home we would take. We also had a mini-van that pulled a trailer for the bikes.



One friend suggested using the trip to raise money for ministries. Pretty soon the group became known as "Bike 4 Christ" because that's what we were going to do. It was our mission. We developed a website so people could pledge support and follow us across the country. We even had T-shirts made. Along with some other knowledgeable friends, Dave and Tom studied a detailed route from Adventure Cycling called the Southern Tier. They decided to make some alterations to this route but basically follow the 8-10 Interstate corridor across the South from San Diego, Calif. to Jacksonville, Fla. The ride started on October 10th and ended on November 6th. The riders touched their back bike tires to the Pacific Ocean at the beginning and their front tires to the Atlantic Ocean at the end. Last year at this time I never dreamed one of those tires would be mine.

Even though initially I was happy to be going along as part of the support crew, at some point along the way a desire grew within me to ride also. My biggest

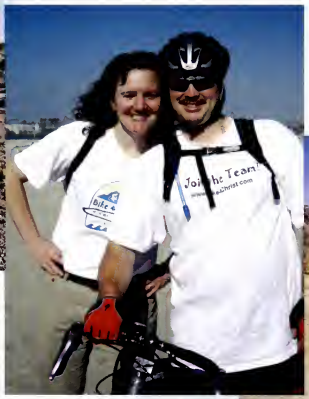


They're off! The first day a variety of riders left the beach in San Diego.

motivation for wanting to ride was I knew it would grow my faith in a very significant way. I knew it would be impossible for me to bike across the country so I also knew that if I ever accomplished a ride like that God would receive all the glory. I thought, if God helped me do that, he could help me do anything. Soon my desire became more of a calling. I didn't totally understand why I was supposed to ride. But as things fell into place, I sensed with increasing excitement that God was going to do something in me. I wanted to experience God take me so far beyond my physical, mental and emotional resources that all I could do was depend on him. This was the miracle I experienced.



Tom Cavanagh



Kristi and Craig Libby

In preparation, Dave and I rode together or with friends whenever we had the opportunity. Unfortunately, this wasn't as often as we would have liked because of our really busy schedules. We were often able to ride on the weekends. We rode 96 miles one day because we would be riding about 100 miles a day on the trip. In the biking world this is known as a "century ride." Dave said it was sort of a test for me to see if I could ride that many miles in a day. I did it but the next day I didn't want to get out of bed—I was so exhausted! I couldn't imagine riding like that day after day.

Then, a month before our departure, I crashed when we were practicing and my flesh became one with the pavement. It took me quite awhile to heal (not only physically, but also emotionally) from that fall. It took me a couple weeks just to get back on my bike. However, God allowed that accident for some important reasons. As his healing took place both on and below the surface, he was setting me free so that I would be ready for the journey ahead. When we started the ride at Ocean Beach in San Diego, I had as much peace as I have ever had. Literally, until I made it to Jacksonville Beach in Florida, I wasn't willing to boast that I would ride every mile. I knew at any moment something could go wrong. However, I also believed with all my heart that if God wanted me to ride every mile he would enable me to do it and I had no fear. I



Dave and Jody Crimi

knew he had a plan, I knew I was in his hands and that was enough for me.



We started the trip with seven riders. Shortly after the first week though we dropped down to four riders: Dave, Tom, Craig and I were the four that rode all the way to Jacksonville. We were able to make the trip in 28 days. We rode an average of about 92 miles a day. Some days we rode well over 100 miles and others we rode only 80. We had one day off in the middle of the four weeks in Del Rio, Texas. This was a glorious day!



By God's Grace, I was able to ride every mile across the country. We rode a total of 2,544 miles. By the last week, I felt like I would ride my bike for the rest of my life. It was all I did. We would start riding as early in the morning as we could and try to make it to camp before the sun set. Once we got to camp, we would shower, eat, share some quotes for the website, make repairs or do laundry and go to bed exhausted. Biking became my life.



There were many challenges and difficulties and many times I wanted to stop riding. I was continually pushed beyond what I could endure. God kept me going though, and through it I experienced much victory. Throughout the entire trip I had a keen sense that God was directing us every "pedal" of the way. It was amazing how he provided for us and worked out details. I could not have done it without the support of my husband and the rest of the team either. They were so patient and so encouraging. I think God will be revealing things to me from that trip for years to come. I'm so thankful I was given the opportunity to do it. I grew so much. There are so many stories I could tell that I wouldn't know where to start or stop. Some of them can be found in our daily journal on our website:





www.bike4christ.com. Our whole route is there, too. Not only did God use this trip in significant ways in our individual lives, but we were able to raise a lot of money for 12 different ministries. My youth group was one of the ministries I raised money for. When I'm not with teens, you might find me riding my bike up and down the coast.✝



They made it! The four cross-country cyclists and their support team reach the Atlantic ocean.

Bike 4 Christ raised more than $17,000.

Ministries supported by the ride include the following:



A.C. Village, Dowling Park, Florida	$500.00
Fallbrook A.C. Church	500.00
Theological Seminary of Baja, California	500.00
First A.C. Church of Tustin, California Youth Ministry	600.00
99+1 (Mexican Mission)	600.00
Camp Maranatha	700.00
North Park Community A.C. Church Youth Ministry	1,500.00
ACGC Special Computer Fund	1,730.00
Chatsworth Lake Community A.C. Youth Ministry	1,900.00
ACGC Penny Crusade	1,950.00
Idyllwild Community Church Mexico Fund	2,000.00
Lincoln Heights Tutorial Program	2,100.00
Mexican Medical	2,426.00

NOTE: An additional $380.00 was raised for miscellaneous ministries



This Side of the Empty Tomb

By Rev. Clayton Blackstone

My friend Tom and his wife, Shelly, learned the hard way how to talk about eternal life with integrity. She went into labor on the Sunday evening before Resurrection Sunday, two weeks before her due date. At midnight, her OB stepped into the room after delivering a baby next door. As if the timing had been guided by Providence, the baby's monitor suddenly revealed no heartbeat. Blood gushed. With no time for a C-section, she pushed as the doctor attempted to suction the baby out Their infant son emerged without a heartbeat.

The frightened mother and dad watched the care team marshal the latest medical technology to save the child. They prayed and struggled with the terror that enveloped them. Three years before, in the shadow of a previous Easter, I had taken them in my arms as we grieved the death of another child born prematurely.

"It was quite a way to prepare for Easter," quipped Tom.

We find ourselves staring down the gun barrel of terror at the most inconvenient of times. We never know when we might discover it aimed at our spirits.

Young adults face one kind of terror as they prepare to leave the security of home for life on their own. A bride and groom face another kind on their wedding day. We encounter it as bills mount.

We hear the sobering click of its trigger as a relationship we committed to for the long haul disintegrates while we stand immobilized and helpless. Click. The doctor reports a suspicious test result. Click. Our children make a disastrous or embarrassing choice.

We drop to our knees, but the ceiling seems to block our cries for help. It's real life — we do what we can to avoid the terrorist assaults on our spirits, but some things can only be faced head on. Even death ... *especially* death. It is our shared destiny.

Many of us parent children who never disappoint us. Some of us will live a lifetime with the same spouse and divorce never mentioned as a possibility. A few will always enjoy a comfortable level of income. A handful will never see the inside of a hospital except to visit a friend. But unless Jesus returns first, we will all run, walk, crawl or be dragged into the valley of death's shadow.

Like many of your neighbors and friends, some members of the First Church of Corinth took a wrong theological turn. It's not certain whether they denied the resurrection outright or spiritualized it. They found the Greek idea of the immaterial part of us — some call it the soul — continuing to live after death, but the idea of a bodily resurrection too huge a leap of faith. Easter didn't mean to some of them what it meant to Paul. He believed with a passion that the physical resurrection of Jesus forever changed the way we look at life and death.

Because Christ has been raised with a flesh and blood body, the resurrection of the dead is central to gospel proclamation. Almost everything followers of Jesus proclaim hinges on this event. If he's dead, people continue to carry the weight of their sin, there's no hope for folks who have died and preachers spout nothing but hot air. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, we have put all our eggs in the wrong Easter basket.

Until that Sunday after Passover, death was life's final word. The adversary won every time. But sometime before dawn that day, to those confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in their hearts that God had raised him from the dead, death slipped to life's second-to-last word. In that time and space event, God defanged death and the condition men once called final was transformed into a harmless good night's sleep.

If Jesus isn't alive, pity us. Call us deluded followers of a crazy man. If this world is all there is, anybody is better off than we are. Michael Horton, a research fellow at Yale University Divinity School, once engaged in a panel discussion with a Roman Catholic scholar, a mainline Protestant and a conservative Jewish rabbi. "Why is someone religious?" the interviewer asked.

"I don't know," he replied. "Without the fact of Christ's historical resurrection, I can't see much use in it."

"Amen," echoes the Apostle. Christ has been raised. Check out the evidence guaranteed to hold up in a court of law. Christ is the first of many more to come.

I spent my growing up years on a potato farm in Aroostook County, Maine. Along about late July, dad would venture into the fields to dig a few hills of potatoes to check the set and assess the potential yield. He'd bring those small potatoes home for mom to cook with new peas, topped off with butter and cream. We'd sit down to a meal fit for a king. But the meal only hinted at the final harvest set for mid-September when barrels and barrels of potatoes would be dug, picked and transported to the potato house for storage.

Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead, but he was the first to be raised to never die again. Everyone with the lifeblood of Adam in his veins faces the certainty of death. The sin of Father Adam and Mother Eve left us with the legacy of death, certain and final. But through faith Jesus transfuses us with uninfected blood charged with resurrection platelets.

Life's hard side makes us wonder. There are days when the things that terrorize us triumph. Christians face marital breakup, struggle with addictions, face job temptations, make poor choices, are diagnosed with terminal illnesses and die at a rate similar to those who live as if God didn't exist. But appearances mask a temporary condition with feelings of the permanent.

The work of redemption may be God's final word on salvation, but it is not the finished work of Jesus. His assignment continues until every enemy of his Father is destroyed. Christ will be victorious over every thing hostile to God. He will liberate his people from the consequences of sin. He will restore the world to its Eden state — ordered and under control. Then he will hand everything over to his Father.

"Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?," asked Sam.

"A great Shadow has departed," said Gandalf, and then he laughed, and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to him that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment, for days upon days without count. It fell upon his ears like the echo of all the joys he had ever known. But he himself burst into tears. Then, as a sweet rain will pass down a wind of spring and the sun will shine out the clearer, his tears ceased, and his laughter welled up, and laughing he sprang from his bed.

"How do I feel?" he cried. "Well, I don't know how to say how I feel, I feel," — he waved his arms in the air — I feel like spring after winter, and the sun on the leaves; and like trumpets and harps and all the songs I have ever sung!"(J.R.R. Tolkien in The Return of the King)

When Jesus finishes with everything, God will be in the driver's seat forever. Until then, we wait. Sometimes circumstances terrorize us, but the lulls in their assaults on our spirits remind the follower of Jesus of a time to come when God will be the last word. It's a done deal — signed, sealed and delivered the moment the ground shook, the Roman guards fainted and the grave clothes dropped from a corpse infused with the breath of God.✝

Rev. Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Advent Chrsitan Church in Bangor, Maine.



Aging Gracefully

By Miriam Snow Priebe

One of the rotten things about growing old is that your friends get old, too. Somehow I can get used to seeing a wrinkle here and there on my own face; but it really shakes me up when I meet a friend I have not seen for years and discover that her hair is gray, and she's using a cane.

My daughter, who recently attended her thirtieth High School Reunion, remarked that the women had stood up better than the men—probably because they made a special effort, calling on Miss Clairol and other products to push back the years. Wait till she goes to her fiftieth! There are certainly changes there that no cosmetics can hide! Still we love to see those old friends, and we recognize the twinkle in their eyes and the bright smiles. They are just aging gracefully.

A sense of humor helps as the years pass. Recently Charles and I went out to dinner with two other couples. As we got out of the car in front of the Market Square Restaurant each of us gave a little groan. Someone mentioned our combined "chorus" and we were all laughing as we sat down to eat. It's good to remember the old saying, "Laugh and the world laughs with you. …"

I read somewhere recently that even-tempered people live longer than their anger-filled neighbors. That's good to remember when we find ourselves getting short-tempered and sour. General Douglas MacArthur said on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, "In the central place of every heart there is a recording chamber; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage, so long you are young. When the wires are all down and your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then and only then are you grown old."

The most important thing which can keep us through our later years is our faith in God. Believing that the universe is in the hands of a loving Father who has a plan for the world gives us meaning and dignity as our lives wind down. Believing that this is not all there is, but a brighter life is ahead, illumines the day-to-day struggle. Contemplating Easter makes our hearts grow younger and our steps lighter! St. Augustine said, "… life is changed, not ended." Let's not just grow old; let's grow old gracefully! ✞



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Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Miraculous Love

It's hard to imagine that the suffering of Jesus is part of God's wonderful works. Perhaps you are one of the millions of people who have seen the death of Jesus as portrayed in graphic detail in the movie, *The Passion of the Christ.* Now, whenever I think of Jesus' death, whether at a communion service or some other time, I find that I am overwhelmed by the depth of Christ's suffering and sacrifice for the sin of mankind. He suffered immeasurably more than I had ever imagined. Although I grew up hearing of Christ's sufferings, never had I envisioned the extent of what he endured. My eyes were *opened* by this depiction — not closed — as never before!

As disciples who love to proclaim the glories of the resurrection, it is far too easy to forget our Lord's suffering. Evangelical Christians are quick to move past the death of Jesus and on to his resurrection. Make no mistake—the resurrection of Jesus is the center of the Christian faith! However, the death of Jesus is something that is almost bypassed in some traditions. Thankfully, some theological perspectives do not allow their adherents to forget! We should be so careful ourselves. Without Jesus' death—as graphic and gruesome as it was—the resurrection would be meaningless!

The psalmist captured the magnitude of God's grace in sending his son to pay the penalty for our sin. *"Oh, that man would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works for the children of men"* (Psalm 107:8 KJV). The setting of the psalm is the Lord's deliverance of his people—from their wilderness wanderings, times of captivity, and even their scattering throughout the earth. The point is that God is the Great Redeemer who has redeemed his people because of his great love.

That is what God has done by the death of Jesus. He has redeemed us by his mercy. His love is so great that he *gave* his only born son to suffer and die in our place. His suffering was real because his love was and is real. The only thing greater than his suffering is his love! That's why the psalmist calls all God's people to an attitude of praise. As one modern paraphrase says, *"Let them praise the Lord for his great love and for the miracles he does for people"*(NLT). Now there's a challenge that's hard to ignore!

When was the last time the miraculous power of God's great love caused you to praise him? Perhaps the death of Jesus has become so familiar that it is a lost truth in need of recapture. I for one would not mind being overwhelmed by God's goodness! When was the last time that happened to you?✞

Find the two Easter eggs that are the same



Replace the letters with the letter before it.

IF TBJE UP UIFN, "HP JOUP BMM UIF XPSME BOE QSFBDI UIF HPPE OFXT UP BMM DSFBUJPO."

Mark 16:15

CRYPTOLIST

Solve this cryptolist to find the people who saw Jesus after his resurrection. Find the letters these letters represent. Once a letter is decoded, it remains the same throughout the list. Look for recurring combinations of letters or repeated letters. (Hint: Q=J)

QMREER	QMKE
PRIW	EROKRERTC
ACTMSRD	OROOKTH
OKMPRD	REGITH
DBPME	QRPTD



(Answers: Joanna, Mary, Cleopas, Thomas, Simon, John, Nathanael, Matthew, Andrew, James)



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Find these words associated with Easter.

J	E	A	C	A	C	T	I	O	H	P	U	B	S
E	G	R	E	B	A	S	K	E	T	S	H	P	E
G	N	E	V	A	N	P	C	T	G	R	E	S	U
S	O	S	C	R	D	Y	O	R	N	G	F	E	L
G	B	U	N	N	Y	N	S	U	J	E	S	G	G
N	C	R	E	S	B	U	P	S	P	C	R	J	U
I	N	R	L	O	U	B	Y	S	O	B	A	E	B
R	I	E	C	A	N	D	R	K	A	R	Y	S	F
P	J	C	E	F	I	L	A	S	K	T	C	U	I
S	O	T	L	I	F	O	V	O	L	I	R	S	L
S	H	I	N	G	L	O	L	O	V	E	Y	N	N
T	L	O	B	U	N	S	A	R	S	S	U	S	E
E	O	N	P	E	T	S	C	C	S	P	R	I	N
K	P	R	G	E	E	Y	R	A	V	L	C	E	R

BASKETS
BUNNY
CALVARY
CANDY
CROSS
EGGS
HOPE
JESUS
LIFE
LOVE
RESURRECTION
SPRING



Unscramble these verses

1. looking Who for? is you it are — John 20:15
2. you! Peace with be — John 20:21
3. and doubting Stop believe. — John 20:27
4. Blessed who have are believed. those seen and have yet not — John 20:29
5. my care sheep. of Take — John 21:16

Therefore...



by Pam Buchanan

It was a cold, snowy morning, the kind that takes a little extra effort to get out of bed and into motion. On this particular morning as I headed into the living room, I first saw the cat and then heard the bird.

Trying to escape the chill outside, a bird had become lodged in our fireplace chimney. The cat was very interested with this sound and was not to be talked into leaving her "post" even for breakfast. I guess she was hopeful for breakfast of a different sort this morning.

The flutter of wings was steady and seemed frantic at times. I wanted to help but was unsure of what to do. I consulted with my husband who seemed to think that the bird who had found a way in would also find a way out. So for the next hour, we proceeded with the tasks of the day, all the while listening to the efforts of the bird and observing the hopefulness of the feline.

It wasn't long before the bird's flutters were successful and the bird was free, but it was a shock to all of us when the bird entered *our* world instead of leaving through the top of the chimney! The next few minutes felt like hours as my husband and I went into "fast forward" speed (or as good as it gets when you are pushing 50) and tried to open doors, while the bird was bouncing off windows in an effort to escape one very excited parsonage cat.

The episode has a happy ending. The bird survived the collisions with the windows, found the open door and escaped to "chirp" this adventure throughout the neighborhood. (I would love to have heard his side of this story). Life inside the house soon returned to normal, and the cat, though a little disap-



pointed, had to be satisfied with "Frisky" from the can.

Now, there is a point to this story and it came a few days later as I sat on the couch in a few peaceful moments of morning solitude. That is when I noticed our cat in the very same position— on "duty" beside the fireplace, gazing upward, wishful and hopeful. This time, there was no noise, no bird and no promise of more than a "continental breakfast." And yet, there she sat, watching and waiting.

My mind flashed to the words of Scripture:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)

"Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:42)

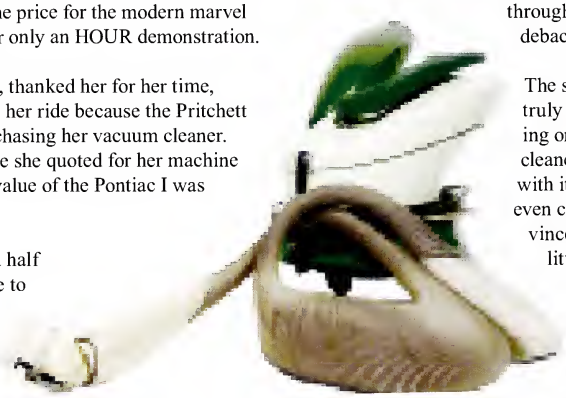
This is a very simple illustration for such profound truth. Our Lord left this earth in a cloud and he has promised to return in one. He is busy with preparations and has left me with the command to "watch, be alert … for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

I was grateful that morning for the reminder as I observed the cat. I did more "looking to the skies" that day, grateful that our reward will be so much greater than a gourmet breakfast—no comparison!✞

Once inside our home, she offered to vacuum our carpet for free while she waited for her ride. I said, "OK, but we are not buying a vacuum cleaner today." She smiled at my defiance and hastily went to work assembling this monstrous machine like a shop full of elves hopped-up on diet pills. She had Robin's rapt attention as I gathered my sandwich to get a closer look for myself before I had to scurry out for a church meeting.

After using this near magical device (by her claims) she had no doubt sucked dirt clean through the cement slab the house was built on. Just before I left for my meeting, she was finally sharing the price for the modern marvel she was peddling — after only an HOUR demonstration.

I smiled as I was leaving, thanked her for her time, and instructed her to call her ride because the Pritchett family would not be purchasing her vacuum cleaner. Truth be known, the price she quoted for her machine exceeded the blue book value of the Pontiac I was driving.



Following my hour and a half meeting, I returned home to retrieve my wife and children to attend my daughter's violin concert. Lo and behold, I find our uninvited house guest still hammering my wife with her sales pitch. At this point, I humorlessly remarked that the time had come for her to leave before I had to claim her on my taxes. We were leaving and we were not buying. She assured us that her ride was nearby, so Robin offered to drive separately after making sure this poor woman would not be left in the cold.

As you might guess, Robin never made it to the concert. After my daughter put her instrument away, we hurried home to make sure everything was alright. As I walked in my front door well after 10:00 p.m. that evening, I found my wife sitting on the floor crying, surrounded by what looked like a collection of Star Wars droids. Appropriately, my first sound was not unlike a howl from Chewbacca the Wookie.

I tried in vain to ignore the obvious and I stupidly asked the question expected of any man facing that situation — "you didn't buy this, did you?" Of course she had purchased this refugee from an episode of monster garage. After more than five hours of a high-pressure sales pitch that included VACUUMING OUR DOG, and cleverly taking our relatively new Sears vacuum in trade, my wife had reluctantly signed the papers to buy the machine, and as a result would likely destroy any hope of sending our children to college.

Never fear, sports fans — the next day I returned the vacuum-a-saurus, retrieved our down payment check, and after threatening legal action, got them to return our old reliable vacuum cleaner. So, you may ask, what was the gleaming spiritual insight gained regarding evangelism — the act of Christians sharing their faith — through this door-to-door debacle?

The sad reality was that I truly was interested in buying one of those vacuum cleaners. I was impressed with its capabilities and even could have been convinced that it was worth a little more because of its quality. The problem lay in the fact that I simply was not ready to buy at that moment, and as a result of her tactics, I have vowed to never own one of those machines. Sometimes in our zeal to "sell" the gospel, we ignore the needs and spiritual progress of those we seek to save.

Tucked away in the ultimate verse of personal evangelism, 1 Peter 3:15, is a similar call to sensitivity in how we share the message. It says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. *But do this with gentleness and respect ....*"

Yes, we are to set apart Christ as Lord of our lives and be ever-ready to answer any who would ask about our faith. But if they are to ask us, should not our presentation of the gospel of Christ in our lives be attractive, genuine and gentle? You see, in sharing our faith we must demonstrate Christ's love and respect for those we seek to evangelize. Otherwise, we run the risk of packaging the gospel like an overpriced vacuum cleaner. Even if our hearers are interested, our smug attitude or self-righteous manner may become barriers to belief.✞

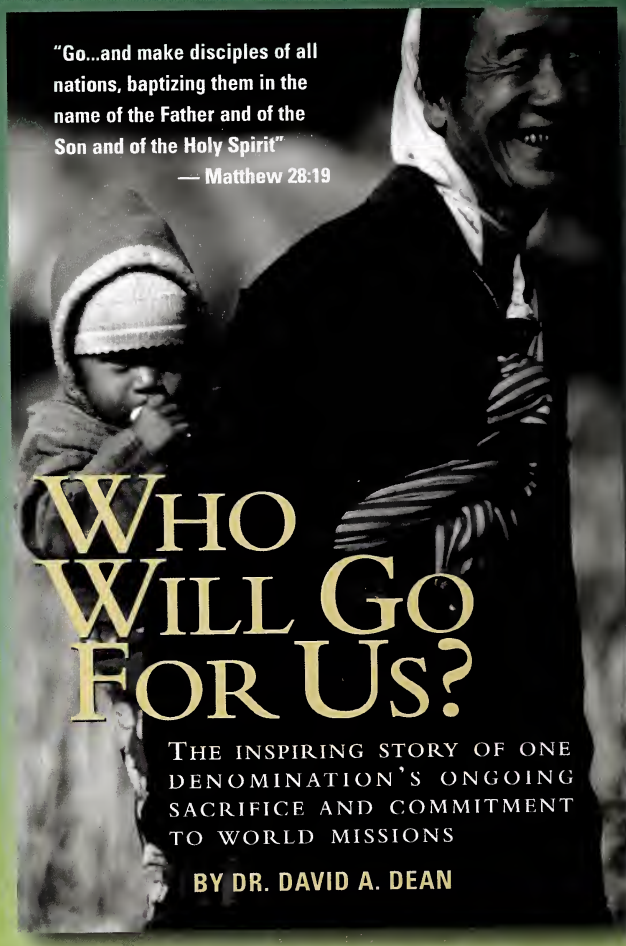


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Guest Editorial



by Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

TRUSSES, TRUST & TRUTH!

Going through a building campaign teaches you many things. For me, it was a basic truth that grabbed my attention. I soon discovered how important it is to have a strong framework upon which to build a building. More importantly, perhaps, is the absolute necessity of placing one's framework upon a sturdy foundation in order to stand against a storm. A solid foundation and strong framework do not eliminate the possibility of storms; but they do increase the chances of withstanding them.

Sometimes, the framework of a building needs to be strengthened due to the realization that it might not withstand the next storm. A recent example of this is the increases made to the structural integrity of building frames because of hurricane Andrew, which hit the state of Florida a dozen years ago. Before Andrew, frames only had to endure 125 mph winds. Now, they are mandated to resist 140 mph.

Many years ago, I was asked a very important question regarding the future of the local church. I responded in this way, "*...the local church will have difficulty growing and maturing because it does not have the structure or framework needed to grow in the way that God intended it to grow.*" Now, years later, as I think more specifically about this question, it appears to me that God was saying something very profound to me. Only now am I beginning to understand.

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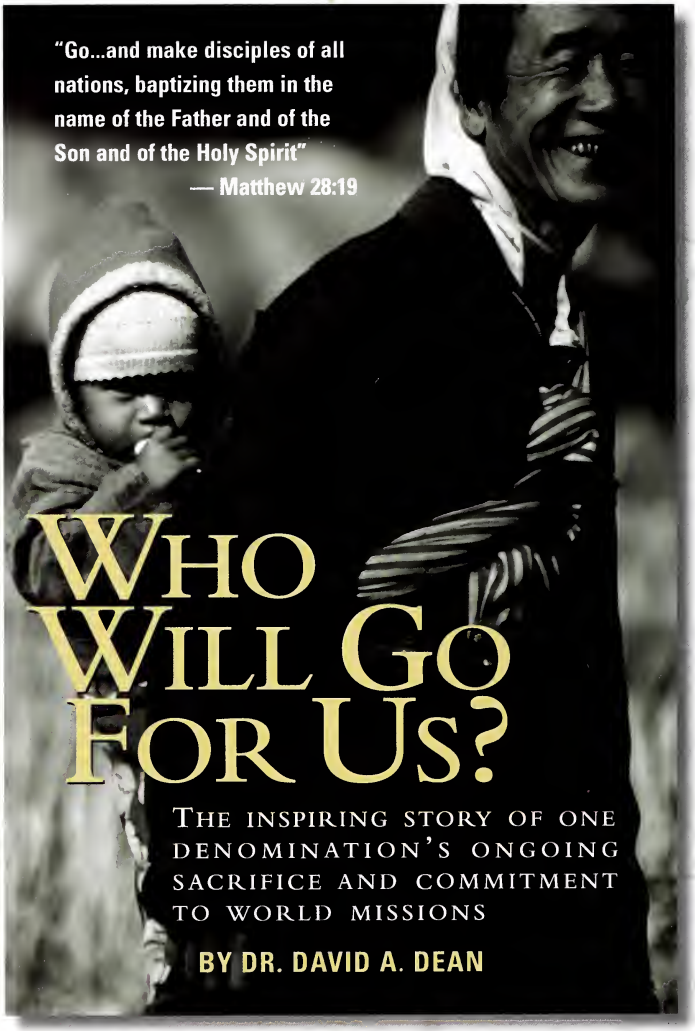
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For more than a decade, Advent Christians have eagerly awaited Dr. David Dean's history of Advent Christian world missions. Now available through Venture Bookstore, this book contains many stories of faith, courage and heartbreak as Advent Christians gave all they had to make disciples for Christ. The following is an excerpt from this work.

The Nanking rampage

The Northern army controlled Nanking. As Chiang Kai Shek's Cantonese army approached, they first cut off the city's escape routes on the Yangtze's south shore. Then they engaged the northern troops just below Nanking. Many of Chiang Kai Shek's soldiers were strongly anti-Christian. The battle began on March 21st and lasted until the 23rd. By the next morning, the Cantonese army occupied the city. The relative quiet was about to give way to the "Nanking Rampage." Foreigners would be robbed, terrorized and murdered; and every foreign building in the city would be vandalized, looted and left in shambles.

March 24, 1927, proved to be a day of terror for all three American Advent Mission Society missionaries trapped within the city. Throughout the day, bands of soldiers followed one another into every foreign edifice. Successive groups uncovered less of value to loot and became more unreasonable with their hostages. They brandished weapons, struck foreigners and threatened to kill them, demanded more money, and vandalized whatever they could. Dr. J. E. Williams, in whose home Orrin Singleterry lived, was murdered in cold blood. One of the most ruthless soldiers punctuated his demands for money by dragging Orrin downstairs. "He showed me the dead body of Dr. Williams crumpled on the stretcher just as they had brought him in from the street. There was a handkerchief over his face, with a bright red stain over the forehead. 'Do you see him?' the soldier asked. I replied that I did. 'That's what I'm going to do to you if you don't find more money for me.' Then he launched into a tirade against the foreigners . . . I thought my end had come, but the Lord was there to sustain and save me. Something drew his attention away for a moment, and I fled back upstairs and rejoined the others." Later, after he and Miss Hazard had each escaped from their buildings, they gathered with other Americans at Nanking University. "I spoke with Mr. Singleterry," Alice reported, "but he seemed too dazed to answer. I think he was nearly crazed when he thought of his young wife and babe lying in the hospital and he unable to go to them."

That day Alice Hazard passed through her own chamber of horrors after soldiers stormed into her Girls' School. Each successive mob proved more violent and out of control. One held a gun to her chest and forced her to partially disrobe while they searched her. Mrs. Hu, an 82-year-old Chinese Christian, sought to protect her. She "threw herself on the floor between the soldiers and me and begged them to spare my life. ... Every time they started for me she would stand between me and them and beg them not to touch me, not to kill me, for I had saved her life. After a time they got tired of this, so they slapped her face and drove her away with guns." But the threats continued. "You can imagine the agony and suspense we were in for hours. At last it seemed to me that it would be a mercy if they did shoot us, for it was so terrible sitting there expecting to die any moment. We lived through eternity in those few hours! None of us ever expected to leave the room alive."

At the hospital, the staff did their best to protect Myrtle Singleterry, her infant son George, and other patients.

But troops continued their periodic intrusions and searched everyone for valuables while also looting the facility. Only after dark that night could the staff smuggle her and the baby safely to Nanking University and a reunion with Orrin.

After American and British warships bombarded Nanking to protect their nationals, Kuomintang officers restored order among their men in the city. By late afternoon the next day (March 25) the Chinese Red Cross supervised an evacuation of foreigners. Miss Hazard and the Singleterry family joined the long procession of carriages, rickshaws, and people on foot on their way to an American warship. They arrived in Shanghai on Sunday evening, March 27.

With time, Commissioner Hewitt could account for all of his missionaries and their children.

"Of the twenty-six foreign lives, including children, connected with our Adventist missions in China, not one was lost." Bertha Cassidy and Helen Seery arrived in Shanghai earlier, but the Spauldings and Singleterrys became the first to sail for the U.S. on Monday, April 4. Later, Mr. Hewitt welcomed Miss Barton, Miss Stocks, her adopted daughter, (Grace Hsuen), the Kenningtons and their youngest two children. Their two older children had been brought to Shanghai from their Nanking school before the battle began. The Commissioner arranged for all of them to return to America by ship. The final booking was for Miss Hazard on a June 4th sailing.

Before H.W. Hewitt left for home himself, he conferred in Shanghai with Joe Wharton.

The once thriving AAMS missionary enterprise was in disarray. Much of its property had been reduced to rubble or was now occupied by the military. Its North American workers had been forced out of the country. What remained was a Chinese church with largely inexperienced leadership, inadequate financial resources, and an uncertain future. Hewitt departed Shanghai on May 9, 1927, leaving Joe Wharton as the only AAMS missionary still at his post in China. Joe was now the secretary-treasurer and superintendent of the field.

The strain of the past few months was imprinted indelibly in the psyches of those who survived them. One could only hope that calm would return so that the China mission might revive. In America, the AAMS Board released its missionaries from their obligations to return. In China, Joe Wharton went back to his Wuhu post and gathered as many reports about the work as possible. They were not encouraging, but he was not deterred. "We intend to carry on," he reported. "Every effort we can put forth to help the people right now is an effort well worthwhile. As far as we can do so, we must continue to help. ... We are glad to be here.

Often weary in the service of God, but never weary of it, we still think this is the greatest mission field in the world. Let us carry on."

And Joe Wharton, at least, did carry on. He hoped it would not be alone.✞

To order your copy of "Who Will Go for Us?" call Venture Bookstore, 800-676-0694, ext. 251.

When a young actress was senselessly killed and her friends left reeling in pain and doubt ...

Grief Gave Him the Mike



By Jason Hudson

Church on the Hill is an Advent Christian church plant in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle. The following story accounts some amazing things God has been doing on Capitol Hill, and we share it in hopes you will pray for those to whom God is revealing Himself. As you can understand, some names have been changed so as to not jeopardize the ministry among those involved.

During the early morning hours of January 28, 2005, Nicole duFresne was shot and killed on the Lower East Side of New York City. Her fiancé held her lifeless body in his arms, surrounded by two friends, also soon to be married. All four had been celebrating Nicole's new job. However, while walking home at 3 a.m., four teenagers mugged the couples and shot Nicole.

Nicole had been an actress in Seattle's fringe theater scene before moving to New York City, and her death received coverage in the New York Times, Washington Post, and Larry King Live. But more than just a headline story, Nicole's life—and now her death—continues to impact those in Seattle's theater community.

Church on the Hill rents space at the Capitol Hill Arts Center (CHAC), a fringe theater located in our neighborhood. Nicole wrote and performed plays used at the CHAC, and the entire community of people in our building was close to her.

I had never heard of Nicole until that Friday, two days after her murder. My friend, Peter, the manager of CHAC, personally e-mailed me an invitation to a memorial gathering Sunday night. He and I have developed a great relationship over the past two years, and his girlfriend, Rachel, was a very close friend with Nicole.

Sunday night came, and I went early to help set-up. My wife, Katie, and I spent a little time with Peter and Rachel, their faces searching for hope of any kind. Everyone mingled with a rare sense of acknowledged need. Yet the wine and hugs were not answering their questions nor relieving their personal fears.

I walked Katie home and then returned. Around 9:00 p.m. people began stepping up to a microphone, telling stories and relating what they remembered about Nicole. As I sat and scanned the room, I remember having a faithless thought: "These people need God, but they are never going to listen to me about Jesus. It'll never happen. These people are too hardened."

I sat with Rachel and Peter for awhile during this time. Peter asked me to run an errand, and when I returned I took a seat in the corner, near the mike but in the dark. For two hours we listened to story after story, and I felt I was getting to know Nicole pretty well.

At the end, Rachel came to the mike and told another story about Nicole. Then she said to all the people in the room: "There's one other thing. I don't know how many of you know this, but there's a resident pastor at the CHAC . . . Pastor Jason." She looked over at me sitting in the dark corner, as did everyone else.

"Jason, I don't mean to embarrass you, but I was hoping you would come and say something to us. We need something, and I believe you have something to give us . . . something we all need and are looking for. Would you come?"

I was shocked. It was as if God was laughing at me, proving his sovereignty. Here was a desperate community asking me to come tell them what they needed.

Every eye in the room was glued on me, waiting eagerly to hear what came through the mike. I began. "This is quite a surprise. I never met Nicole. I had never seen her. I never had the chance to see one of her plays. I had never heard of her before Peter e-mailed me on Friday night. "But I feel like after tonight I know Nicole. I know Nicole, not because I've seen or heard her, but because her best friends have told me about her.

"It is hard to believe God would care about how we feel. We can't see him. We can't hear him. We can't touch him. But Jesus' best friends have told us about him. And they tell us that he cares. They tell us God has passion for us.

"Tonight, I need to tell you about God. I need to tell you about Jesus. Some of you may hate Jesus. Some



Jason Hudson ministering at Church on the Hill



Capital Hill Arts Center is the meeting place of Church on the Hill, an Advent Christian Church in Seattle, Washington.

of you may love Jesus. But what you need to know is that Jesus cares about what you are going through.

"Jesus had a good friend, Lazarus, who died. Jesus felt just like you. He hated death. He cried over his friend. He felt the pain you're feeling. God knows what it's like to lose someone you love, and he came to bring life.

"Could I please have the opportunity to pray over you tonight? Can I pray that Jesus would help you in your lives?"

Astonishingly, the response was overwhelmingly yes. Even Nicole's two friends, who had been with her the night she was shot, looked at me with big eyes and nodded their heads emphatically. On a night when I was faithless that these people would ever listen to me about Jesus, they had ASKED me to close in prayer! Jesus was preached to the Seattle population of fringe theater. And I finished by praying the Gospel over them.

We ask for prayer because this opportunity has resulted in people from CHAC continuing to ask questions. One person, in particular, is asking questions about how to know God. With the finality of death exposing our frailty, these artists are recognizing that their personal causes in this life may not extend past their own death. They're dependent on something beyond themselves; a new thought to many of these people.

This is the break we have been waiting for on Capitol Hill. A few church planters here on the Hill have been praying for such an opening for some time, and God has proved faithful to his passion for the people here. Please pray that God continues to miraculously allow for us to speak about Jesus.✝



Jason and Katie Hudson are serving as pastor and wife at an AC church, The Church on the Hill, in the Capitol Hill section of Seattle, Wash.

No Regrets

Fifty years without disappointment

by Clio Thomas

Paul tells us in Romans 10, "No one who believes in him (Christ) will ever be disappointed." That's a bold claim that Paul throws out to us. But, after 50 years of pastoral ministry, I can say to you that it's true. It doesn't mean that life will never disappoint us, or that other people won't disappoint us, but that Jesus will never disappoint us!

As I finish 50 years of pastoral ministry I am reminded of the words of Polycarp when he was arrested and



Rev. Clio Thomas is standing at the entrance of an orchard in Sta. Cruz, Claveria, Misamis Oriental, in Mindanao—the southern island of the Philippines—that has been purchased by the A.C. Missions of New Zealand for the Philippine Conference. The purpose of the orchard is to generate income—from the sale of its fruit—for pastors and church planting. Monies were given by the West Valley A.C. Church in Seattle, Washington to purchase the first plantings in the orchard in honor of Clio and Kathleen's ministry of 43 years.

asked to renounce the name of Jesus. His words were, "I have served him eighty-six years and he has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who has saved me? Hear me plainly, I am a Christian."

Christianity is all about Jesus—not about us or about our feelings, our personal successes or failures. It is all about the Christ of whom Paul said that if we trust in him we will never be disappointed. I have no regrets about serving Jesus for 50 years. It has been and is still the most satisfying and rewarding thing I could ever imagine. When we trust him with our lives he stuns and amazes us "above all that we could ever ask or think." He is a wonderful master. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

The things that I find myself thinking about most as this chapter of my life comes to an end and a new chapter is beginning, are those things tied up with Jesus and his immeasurable love and promises.

I think about things like these:
Why is it that some people seem to come so close to Jesus, perhaps even meet him, and "accept" him intellectually but never fall in love with him? He has never hurt them; on the contrary he loves them intensely, but they keep him at arms length. My heart is sad that they never seem to come to know him better. Oh, how they miss out on what life is all about….because he is the way, the truth, and the life!

Why do some Christians —

1. seem to come so close to Jesus, maybe even meet him and accept him intellectually, but never "fall in love" with him?
2. give "token gifts" to Jesus, but refuse to tithe when all any of us ever have comes from him in the first place?
3. make decisions in life without asking God's will? How can he bless what he had no part in choosing?
4. retire and fritter away time in meaningless activity?
5. who call themselves a part of Christ's Church, take their commitment to the Church so lightly and seldom join in the corporate worship and fellowship of the gathered body of Christ?

When will we ever learn his full lesson that if we yield all to him he will more than take care of us and meet all our needs? Some of us hold onto our money, time, and energy as though they were ours alone, and we are smart enough to know how to handle them. Many Christians refuse to give to him a tithe of their income. We give him token "gifts" but don't seem to realize that all any of us ever have comes from him in the first place. We have ample funds to buy all kinds of toys for ourselves and then give a token gift to him who loves us so much

that he gave everything for us. After 50 years I'll never understand a Christian who refuses to tithe. The tragedy is that when we refuse we are the biggest losers. I say this with tears!

The greatest joy in life is finding one's self in the will of God. Over the years I have discovered the need to hang loose and be willing to do whatever he wants. This is not only the best thing for him and his kingdom, but also for us as individuals. For when we are in the will of God we are in cooperation with the Lord of the universe and engulfed in his wonderful grace and powerful resources. The Lord's Prayer has become a pattern for prayer for me. Pray that prayer and ponder it every day for a month and it will change your life. I guarantee it!! Every life decision ought to be made in light of knowing God's will for our lives. We need to pray ahead of time for his will, not ask him later to bless the things we decided without giving him any choice in the matter. How can he bless what he had no part in choosing?

> Christianity is all about Jesus—not about us or about our feelings, our personal successes or failures.

I don't believe in retirement, at least in retirement in the sense that we have come to know it in America, where people leave jobs to play and travel for pleasure. I think of some of the great Christians who were active in their ministries into their 80's and 90's. I was past 70 when God called me to serve him in Africa, and then in the far-flung countries of Asia. God has too much for us to do to fritter away our time in meaningless activity.

I'll never understand Christian people who call themselves a part of Christ's Church, but who seldom join in the corporate worship and fellowship of the gathered body of Christ. I am not talking about sick and shut-in folk. I am thinking of able-bodied people who take their commitment to the Church so lightly. The reality is that Jesus saves individuals to make them a part of his body, the Church, not to be islands unto themselves. We need Christ more than anyone, but we also need each other. I will never understand Christians who don't see that and live it.

Your future may be dark and hidden. The road may be long and steep. There may be much to face, and much to bear. But, one thing I can say with the full assurance of Christ and his followers through the ages, "No one who puts his trust in Christ will ever be disappointed. No one." No, not you! Trust him! Test him! Take him as your life's companion. He will never fail you!✞

Rev. Clio Thomas was the pastor of the West Valley A.C. Church in Seattle, Washington for several years. Currently he is serving the denomination as the Asia Pacific Area Director. He holds leadership roles in meetings with pastors, conferences and other leaders of the western region. In addition to these responsibilities, Clio is also actively involved in his landscaping business, "Trends."

Jesus is coming back...



Advent Christian
General Conference
President
Rev. Glenn Rice

Maybe Today

"Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"
(Titus 2:13, English Standard Version).

What a great time to be an Advent Christian! In the midst of the world's darkness we know the hope of the Gospel that brings life and light to every man. Paul calls this "the blessed hope," and indeed it is!

The Advent Christian Church stands on the sure foundation of the Second Coming of Jesus. Our heritage reminds us that we have an unshakable hope. In an age when this doctrine has been diluted or "turned over to the crazies and the confused" (in the words of one modern writer), Advent Christians can boldly proclaim a message we have always believed. Jesus *is* coming soon, and the lateness of the hour suggests that the day of his appearing is drawing near!

I believe our forefathers in the faith would welcome the opportunity to proclaim this blessed hope in an age of dreadful darkness and human hopelessness. People, now more than ever, need to know the Source of all hope, which is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus! In the words of an old Adventist hymn, "The stars of heaven are growing dim, it must be the breaking of the day." As this world appears to hang precipitously on the edge of collapse and despair looms large among the populace, Advent Christians still have the opportunity to proclaim the timeless truths of God's Word. We may not have our prophetic charts or big tents in which to conduct our crusades, but neither do we need them! What we have is what we have always had – the Good News that Jesus is coming again, and he is coming soon!

Will this be the message that will identify twenty-first century Advent Christians? The world around us is filled with people who see history as out of control. Others are gripped with fear of an unknown future. Only the doctrine of the Kingdom of God—with its promised consummation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—can meet the need of the hour. This doctrine needs to be interpreted meaningfully to this insecure generation. That can only be accomplished by a people who believe the message and are committed to the task at hand. We need a renewed commitment to carry this message forward and proclaim it as it once was declared. Time is growing short and we must not delay. The next sound heard around the world may be the blast of his trumpet!

As we proclaim this message in these closing days of time, may the Lord empower us and grant us success. His coming is drawing near, and these are indeed great days to be an Advent Christian!



The staff of Advent Christian General Conference

Executive Director

"Convinced of the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ, Advent Christian General Conference exists to Encourage, Equip, and Empower Advent Christians worldwide to be obedient to His Great Commandment and Great Commission." (Mission Statement for Advent Christian General Conference)

Our beginnings as a denomination were defined by a sense of urgency. As we did then, today we still believe the Second Coming of our Lord is near. Jesus told his disciples, *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him (Matthew 24:44)."* This fact has prompted us to be determined to communicate the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. And because of this message, we must be diligent to carry out the mandates of our Lord. That is why both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission are at the center of all we do.

To keep us focused on the purposes we believe God would have us to pursue, we have proposed a three-year strategic plan. Four specific planning areas will receive our attention, with the belief we will be taking steps toward preparing for the future. The first of those planning areas is "Communicating our Message." While our new mission statement embraces that message, it is clearly stated by Jesus himself as recorded in Rev. 22:20, *"Yes, I am coming soon."* This fact alone accents the importance of what we do every day as followers of our soon-coming King. The other planning areas that will support the communicating of this message are: Leadership Development, Stewardship and Governance.

The partnership with our local churches, conferences, regions and mission outreaches is critical to what we do as a denomination. Hopefully, the direction we prayerfully determine will be a course that establishes a spirit of unity and commonness of goals. While Advent Christian General Conference provides the resources and assistance to strengthen the local church, our main objective is to provide leadership that will demonstrate our commitment to one another and to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ our Lord. To this end we pray.

A defining discipline upon which our history has been formed and our future rests is the active and purposeful exercise of prayer. There has been a renewed emphasis of this spiritual discipline within our churches. Prayer is more than a seasonal program. It is the means by which we are connected to one another and to the One who taught us to pray. We have neither life, nor purpose, nor any future without prayer defining who we are and what we are to do. And our prayer is; *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus..." Romans 15:5*



Department of Services

Convinced of the imminent return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Advent Christian General Conference is committed to accountability and stewardship of funds entrusted to us by our donors. We want to use your gifts wisely and effectively in Christ's Service. To ensure our financial accountability, ACGC is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. We fully support the purpose and goals of ECFA and comply with its membership standards, including an annual audit performed by an independent certified public accounting firm in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and generally accepted accounting principles. The Department of Services provides reports to and meets with the Executive Council. This fulfills ECFA standards of meeting biannually to establish policy, review its accomplishments and set the budget for each year.

The Department of Services is responsible for all financial accounting and reporting, cash management, investments, and budgeting activities of the Advent Christian General Conference, the Advent Christian Tithing Association, and the Advent Christian Minister's Pension Plan. The department maintains and operates housing, offices, grounds, computer services, equipment and automobiles, as well as the Venture Bookstore and Media Center.

Advent Christian Ministers Pension Plan
For more than 50 years the pension plan has provided life insurance benefits for pastors and missionaries. More than 30 years ago, the plan was expanded to include a retirement savings plan. Pension members' funds are independent of any other funds, are invested wisely and continue to grow each year.

Advent Christian Tithing Association
The Tithing Association exists for the purpose of informing and teaching Advent Christians of the biblical directive to give to God's work. This theme will become an integral part of our Strategic Planning Process and the Association will play a major role in this effort.

United Ministries
United Ministries is the income received from churches giving to Penny Crusade and tithing. Thirty percent of this money is sent to the regional offices to support ministries in each region. The remaining 70% is distributed to ACGC ministries according to the budget set by the Executive Council.



Department of World Missions

Convinced of the imminent return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and believing in His command that *"this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come"* (Matthew 24:14), Advent Christians formed the American Advent Mission Society with the urgent task of fulfilling Christ's command. This took place just five short years following the creation of the denomination.

The Department of World Missions is a successor to the American Advent Mission Society as a department of the Advent Christian General Conference. It oversees and administers the missionary advance of the Advent Christian people. What began as a fledging work in 1865 today covers the world, with Advent Christians meeting in over thirty countries in the world and numbering approximately 50,000 believers outside North America. The department provides support, material, sponsorship of Bible schools and colleges, financial aid in building churches and encouragement to our Advent Christian brethren worldwide.

Advent Christian World Missions challenges and recruits people for career and short-term missionary service. It is responsible for assessing their qualifications and administering their work in the field. The Director of World Missions is assisted by four Area Directors (Africa/Europe, Asia/Pacific, Latin America, and North American Urban/Ethnic Ministries). It is the department's responsibility to raise funds for the support and outreach of Advent Christian missionaries and national workers around the world. It assists in three Bible schools overseas with more schools being planned. The department provides information and education about our worldwide missionary work by providing weekly Mission updates, *Penny Crusade* kits, and visits to churches and conferences, bringing a strong missions emphasis.

Advent Christian World Missions also provides some humanitarian and benevolent relief to deprived countries, congregations, and individuals around the world. In North America, World Missions reaches out to plant churches among diverse racial and ethnic groups through its Urban/Ethnic Ministry program and provides support and encouragement to urban/ethnic churches in the United States.

Above all, the department mobilizes prayer for our worldwide mission emphasis to help prepare for the coming of our Lord and King. We seek to serve the Advent Christian constituency and assist the local Advent Christian church in being part of the worldwide outreach as commanded by our Lord.



Urban/Ethnic Ministries

"Convinced of the imminent Return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Advent Christian General Conference Division of Urban/Ethnic Ministries (as part of the Department of World Missions) is committed to proclaiming this message of hope. Through public meetings, personal contacts, electronic mailings and other means, our goal is to provide Advent Christians with information that will encourage them and enable them in their efforts to make disciples 'of all the nations' living here in North America as 'that day' approaches."

My job as North American area director for Urban/Ethnic Ministries is to assist the director of World Missions by "keeping tabs" on several dozen Advent Christian churches, missions, and fellowships whose purpose statements include a specific commitment to inner-city ministry. I'm also charged with the maintenance of an Advent Christian outreach to people of an ethnicity other than the "traditional" light-skinned, English-speaking, native-born Americans who make up over 95% of all the Advent Christians in North America.

To support these ministries I do three things:

1. Visit the urban/ethnic churches as often as time permits in order to consult with the pastors and the people, and to see for myself how things are going;
2. Conduct annual urban/ethnic ministries conferences at various locations throughout the US and Canada to give pastors (and others interested in this type of ministry) an opportunity for education, inspiration, reflection, and interaction with one another;
3. Publish a FREE monthly newsletter, available to anyone who would like to receive it, containing reports, announcements, and other items of interest to the general subject of urban/ethnic ministry. If you would like to subscribe, contact UEMN News, P.O. Box 23152, Charlotte, NC 28227-0272. You can also call 1-800-676-0694, ext. 250 or fax (1-704-573-0712), or E-mail (jroller@acgc.us), or you can leave a voice mail message (1-800-713-3326, then 7047829574#).

I'm also available to speak on urban/ethnic ministries to any group, and to answer any questions you have on this rapidly growing and changing field of ministry. Call 1-800-676-0694, ext. 250 (well in advance, please!) to schedule a visit.

Maybe Today

John Roller



Department of Publications

Convinced of the imminent return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Department of Advent Christian Publications is committed to helping Advent Christian churches publish this message of hope. We do this by printing and distributing a variety of materials for equipping and encouraging Advent Christians to obey our Lord's Great Commission. Our mailroom/printing staff do everything from mailing the quarterly Sunday school material to printing, binding and shipping *Maranatha*.

The Advent Christian News goes monthly to all North American AC churches and features information about denominational ministries made possible by the support of local churches. It provides a means for conferences and regions to announce upcoming events, and it gives Advent Christians a monthly update from the executive director, as he shares his thoughts on our vision as a people.

The Advent Christian E-news offers this same type of information on a weekly basis, via the Internet. This service enables ACGC to publish vital information instantly, and gives readers a means to respond through dynamic links. With a simple click on the computer screen Advent Christians can now contact the national office or visit the denomination's website. To be added to the E-news mailing list, send your request to acpub@adventchristian.org.

Periodicals provide another means of encouraging and equipping Advent Christians to obey the Great Commission. The *Advent Christian Witness* features articles of testimony, examples of disciple-making, and inspirational writing for all ages. The *Maranatha* devotional guide provides daily encouragement through Scripture and comments by a variety of Advent Christians. *Henceforth* is a journal that offers in-depth discussion in areas of theology, history and hermeneutics. *Prayer and Praise* gives a monthly list of prayer requests and praises for answered needs of Advent Christian missionaries in particular. While each periodical has its own focus and readership, together they share a common goal of encouraging and equipping Advent Christians. To subscribe to any of ACGC's periodicals, call 800-676-0694, ext. 242.

Advent Christian Publications also engages in special projects, such as the Advent Christian hymnal, Hymns of Heritage and Hope; Dr. David Dean's history of Advent Christian world missions, "Who Will Go for Us?"; and the re-recorded CD, "Maybe Today." Until the Lord comes, Advent Christian Publications will use these and other means to help encourage and equip Advent Christians to prepare the world for his return.



Department of Church Relations

Convinced of the imminent return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Department of Church Relations assists churches in understanding denominational activities and helps local congregations to be Great Commission and Great Commandment churches. The director is charged with two basic objectives, which are to share information concerning programs of General Conference and to develop sources of funding to support its programs. He has the oversight of denominational ministries (i.e. Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society, Student Commission, etc.), sponsoring the events on the Calendar of Observance, is program chairman for special events (Pastors' Conference, General Conference, etc.), and promotes United Ministries, the shared fund-raising campaign between Advent Christian General Conference and each of the five regions.

Through the Calendar of Observances, we provide promotional materials for the local church to use in ministering to their congregation. Every year we offer materials for Denominational Prayer Emphasis, Penny Crusade, Days of Prayer (National Day of Prayer, Days of Prayer for World Evangelism), Stewardship, Women's Sunday, Pastor Appreciation Day, and Christmas in October. With all of the other events, (Urban Ministries Sunday, Church Growth Sunday, Publication Sunday, Youth Sunday, Christian Education Sunday, etc) an effort is made to promote them at least once every triennium. Also, the department works with our associate members to aid them in their promotion among our churches.

Over the years we as a denomination have develop partnerships and endorsed ministries to strengthen the work of the local church (i.e. SonLife, Mission America, Intimate Life, Church Communication Network, etc.). The director represents the denomination to these ministries and shares information, which is beneficial to our church. He meets with the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network on an annual basis and with other groups, such as Christian Stewardship Association, as his schedule will allow. At the last meeting of the National Prayer Committee, he was issued an invitation by the chairman to become a member.

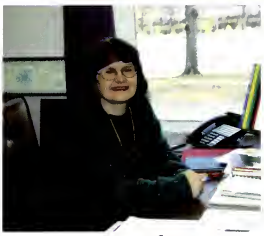
Several new roles have been assigned to Church Relations by the new Executive Director: designing the new prayer room at the general office, writing the weekly IF Team updates, reviewing all the conferences' reports, churches' reports and ministers' reports.

We continue to administer the New Church Builders Union, a joint effort by union members and our Advent Christian churches, which offer grants to churches planning to build new structures. Over the years this fund has provided finances to over 78 churches to aid in the construction of new structures.

The director of Church Relations provides leadership in pastors' retreats; speaks at revivals, camp meetings, conferences, and regional meetings. He is often called upon to fill pulpits, speak at church homecomings or anniversaries and answer questions concerning General Conference.



Women's Ministries



Pam Buchanan

Convinced of the imminent return of Christ, the Department of Women's Ministries for our Advent Christian Denomination is alive, well, and seeking to continue the work until he comes.

The word "convinced" is defined in the dictionary as: "to believe, to feel sure of or to be persuaded." The word "imminent" is defined as "likely to happen soon, or about to occur."

With our denominational roots firmly established in this teaching, it is natural that a heart for evangelism should follow. The women of the Early Advent Christian church caught this vision quickly, and the first Women's Mission Society was founded in July 1897. With God's blessing, the six-member "starter group," led by Sarah K. Taylor in Friendship, Maine, has blossomed into over 100 societies that are active in spreading the "Gospel of the Kingdom," both at home and abroad.

All of our Women's Home and Foreign Mission Societies are united together under the acrostic of WHFMS. This title contains three key words that relate to our statement of purpose.

Women: We are women ministering to women. This includes reaching out to those who have needs, providing fellowship, encouraging spiritual growth, listening, and supporting each other as friends. We seek to minister to the whole person, which includes the physical, emotional, mental, and most importantly, the spiritual aspects of one's life. WH&FMS seeks ways to unite our women in service, to develop leadership among our women, and to support the ongoing mission of our churches by mentoring the next generation.

Home: This word brings up many warm images of a very dear place in our hearts. Women are all about our homes and families. "Home" brings out our nurturing side, and we seek to educate our women concerning our Biblical responsibilities as Godly wives and mothers. This word also represents our commitment to the spiritual needs in our neighborhoods, communities and our homeland. We vigorously support these works with our prayers and our monetary gifts, and we encourage the giving of our time and talents to home mission works.

Foreign: For many of the early years, our Society shouldered the total responsibility for our India mission work. Through the years, as the number of our Societies has increased, our vision has never wavered. As the denominational mission work has expanded, our commitment to reaching the world for Christ remains a motivating factor for our groups. From our simple beginning we have been committed to outreach evangelism, and to educating ourselves and others about our missionaries, their needs and activities. Our ladies pioneer various efforts in our local churches that support many ministries on foreign soil like "Christmas in October" and our monthly *Prayer and Praise* publication.

We read in Matthew 24:44, "Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Verses 45-46 continues with this question and statement, "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns." Therein is our vision and our challenge in Women's Ministries, that he would find us faithful and busy in his service when he returns.

"...Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelations 22:20

Maybe Today



Our History

William Miller and the Early Phases of the Advent Movement

Part 3

Address delivered at the biennial meeting of the Advent Christian General Conference,

June 26, 1932, Campground, Plainville, Connecticut

by Orrin Roe Jenks

Last Days

William Miller died in December 1849. The five years from 1844 to the time of his death were years of decline and increasing feebleness. The first part of the period was devoted to lectures in churches, attending conferences, and correspondence.

In Albany, New York, in April 1845, a conference of Advent believers was held, attended by a large number of the leading ministers who had been associated with Mr. Miller. At this history conference, the condition of the cause was studied and discussed, a statement of faith was prepared and published, and a plan for future work was formulated.

The statement of faith reaffirmed the belief of the delegates in the near advent of the Savior and the evangelical faith. The plan for future work called for activity on the part of all, especially in preparation to meet the Lord by holy living.

The majority of the Advent believers were pleased with the action taken at the Albany conference, but others were greatly displeased, and this led to the advocacy of various doctrines which tended to divide and disrupt.

After attending a conference in Boston, and a visit to Portland, Maine, where he preached to large audiences, Mr. Miller retired to his home in Low Hampton. He considered it his duty to make a personal statement to the Christian public, inasmuch as he had been the author of the movement which apparently had ended in disappointment, and in disaster to some. This "Apology and Defense" he dictated to Sylvester Bliss, and it was published in a tract of thirty-six pages by Joshua V. Himes.

The Defense shows that two hundred ministers had embraced his views, six thousand had been converted from "nature's darkness to God's marvelous light," the result of his personal labors alone. More than seven hundred infidels had abandoned their unbelief for the blessed hope. Five hundred public lectures had been associated with him in preaching the near-coming of Christ.

In the autumn of 1845, Father Miller, as he was now called,

visited New York City, Philadelphia, and many towns in Vermont, lecturing and laboring to stabilize the work. A digest of his messages is expressed in his words:

"I would exhort my Advent brethren to study the Word diligently...Avoid everything that shall cause offense. Let your lives be models of goodness and propriety. Let the adversary get no advantage over you. We have been disappointed; but disappointments will work for our good, if we make the right use of them. Be faithful. Be vigilant...Avoid unnecessary controversy and questions that gender strife. Be not many masters; all are not competent to advise and direct. God will raise up those to whom he will commit the direction of his cause. Be humble, be watchful, be patient, be persevering. And may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve you blameless unto the glorious appearing of the great day of God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

In January 1848, the loss of eyesight came. In the autumn of 1849 his health failed entirely. In his home on the farm at Low Hampton, in the presence of his family with his intimate friend and co-worker by the bedside, on the twentieth of December, he peacefully fell asleep in Christ. The funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Himes from Acts 26:6-8, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible to you that God should raise the dead?" The services lasted for three hours. And then the valiant warrior was laid to rest in the little burying ground near Low Hampton. On the tombstone these words are inscribed:

"At the appointed time the end shall be."
WILLIAM MILLER
Died
December 20, 1849
in the sixty-eighth year of his age.
"But go thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

An Appraisal of William Miller

Various opinions have been held in regard to this remarkable man. In his lifetime he was called by his enemies a monomaniac, a fanatic, a liar, a speculating knave, a deluded old fool.
But now, after the passing of nearly a century since he was here on the stage of human history, sober inquiry is seeking a proper estimate of the man and his work. It is believed that the following brief appraisal will stand the test of the most careful scrutiny:

1. He was a man of absolute sincerity and honesty. For the first five years of his ministry he met his personal expenses and traveling costs from his own funds. In Canada, where he was on a lecturing tour, a woman placed two half-dollars in his hand, which was all the money he received previous to 1836.



Miller wrote confession of error

May 2, 1844



S.S. Snow advocated "Day of Atonement," Oct. 22, as date of Christ's return

July, 1844



Miller also favored Oct. 22 for 2nd coming

Oct. 6, 1844



THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT
Adventists gathered at Ascension Rock to await Christ's return

Oct. 22, 1844

1844
Brigham Young became leader of Morman Church after murder of Joseph Smith



1844
Charles Goodyear was granted patent for vulcanized rubber



1844
Texas became a U.S. territory



1845
First hypodermic syringe entered the market



2. He was a devoted follower of the Lord Jesus. I quote from a letter of Miller's written in 1834:

> "Give me Jesus and a knowledge of his Word, faith in his name, hope in his grace, interest in his love, and let me be clothed in his righteousness, and the world may enjoy all the high-sounding titles, the riches it can boast, the vanities it is heir to, and all the pleasures of sin; and they will be no more than a drop in the ocean. Yes, let me have Jesus Christ, and then vanish all earthly joys. What glory has God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ!…In him all power dwells. He is the evidence of all truth, the fountain of all mercy, the giver of all grace, the object of all adoration, and the source of all light; and I hope to enjoy him to all eternity."

version. "The Bible now became my chief study…I searched it with great delight."

In his Creed, Article XVI, he says: "I believe that before Christ comes in his glory, all sectarian principles will be shaken, and the votaries of the several sects scattered to the four winds; and that none will be able to stand but those who are built on the Word of God."

Again: "I am more and more astonished at the harmony and strength of the Word of God…Let us be determined to live and die on the Bible."

His lectures, sermons, articles, letters, and all are saturated with the Word of God.

4. He was a great winner of souls. All the preaching of Mr. Miller had for its object the reformation, the regeneration of the hearer. His aim was to convert the unsaved. He loved the book of Daniel; and in that book he had read: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

There are thousands now awaiting their reward of whom this preacher of righteousness will be able to say: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"



Conference of Advent believers held. The condition of the cause and plan for future work was discussed

April, 1845



William Miller dictated "Apology and Defense" that was published in a tract of 36 pages

Summer, 1845

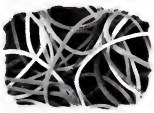


Father Miller, as he was now called, visited NYC, Philadelphia and VT to stabilize the work

Fall, 1845

1845

Stephen Perry invented the rubber band



1845

Elias Howe produced sewing machine with a tight lock continuous stitch



Feb. 23, 1846

Liberty Bell tolled for last time to mark George Washington's birthday



1846

First recorded baseball game. Alexander Cartwright's Knickerbockers lost to NY Baseball Club



1846

Dr. William Morton first used anesthesia for tooth extraction



Such words can only spring from the heart of one who is in fellowship with God, who has been with Jesus and learned of him.

3. He had a passionate love for the Word of God. He thus writes of his attitude towards the Bible at the time of his con-

Helpers and Hinderers

Of helpers, we may mention:

1. Churches and pastors. For a decade or more it was a movement in the churches—Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Christian. Several hundred able, scholarly, godly pastors, and thousands of holy men and

women gave wholehearted and enthusiastic support to the movement.

2. Joshua V. Himes. He was the remarkable publicity man, who was able to found and maintain papers, publish books and tracts, and send broadcast millions of pages carrying the good news of the kingdom of God.

Mr. Himes came in for his share of misrepresentation and abuse, but of him, Mr. Miller writes: "I cannot here withhold my testimony to the efficiency and integrity of my Brother Himes. He has stood by me at all times, periled his reputation, and by the position in which he has been placed has been more instrumental in the spread of these views than any other ten men embarked in the cause."

Of hinderers, we may mention:

1. The denominational and secular press, in many cases, misrepresented, maligned, and opposed the work. This is sad in view of the fact that in practically every place where Mr. Miller delivered his lectures there followed a revival in which there were many additions to the churches.

2. *Fanaticism.* Although it did not appear in any marked degree until after 1843, yet it was part and parcel of the same brand that did injury to the reformation in the time of Luther, and which brought disrepute upon the adventual preaching of the eloquent and remarkable Edward Irving.

Our Heritage

Out of this movement there has come to the Advent Christian people and to the church-at-large a great heritage. William Miller and his fellow workers brought to the forefront of Christian teaching, the blessed hope—the doctrine of the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Their emphatic insistence upon the coming of the eternal kingdom of God was but the resurrection of a vital gospel truth, which today is preached with power in every part of the earth.

And we must not forget that at the same time that Mr. Miller was preaching the coming of the Lord, such men as George Storrs were proclaiming the good news of life in Christ. And these two doctrines—the coming of the Lord and life in Christ—place before us the goal of a world in which moral evil is ultimately to be destroyed. The late Joseph Parker of the City Temple in London, in speaking of the destruction of evil says, "And by destroying evil I do not mean locking it up by itself in a great moral prison which shall be enlarged from generation to generation, until it becomes the abode of countless millions of rebels; but its utter, final and everlasting extinction; so that at last the universe shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing—the pure home of a pure creation."✝



Miller Chapel built

1848



William Miller died

December 1848

1847

Abraham Lincoln took seat in U.S. House of Representatives and became known for opposition to slavery



January 1848

Gold was discovered in California at John Sutter's sawmill



March 1848

Wyatt Earp was born



July 1848

First Women's Rights Convention was held. Organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton



1849

Walter Hunt invented safety pins



(editorial continued from page 3)

The building of the local church and its ministry also requires a framework upon which it can be built. Jesus made it clear in his response to Peter in Matthew 16:18 that the church would find its foundation to be the person and nature of Christ. While building the spiritual church is different than building a physical building, there are some amazing similarities. One thing's for sure, to build an acceptable church (spiritual) or building (material) one must follow the blueprints. For the believer, that's got to be God's Word.

Looking at a set of blueprints can be a scary task, especially if you do not know a few things about reading a blueprint. For example, you should only read what's on the blueprint and never assume anything. A careful examination of a blueprint can reveal some interesting insights to the building process. For example, the building process is done in steps. Some steps precede other steps in the overall process of building the building. The same is true for the church. Some things are fundamentally more important than other things when it comes to building the church and must be tackled first.

One such thing is leadership. When it comes to building the church one must ask whether or not the Bible provides a blueprint for how leadership should be done? In this the Bible is crystal clear. In essence, the church is to be led by godly leaders who meet the biblical standards for leadership, rather than led by a group of people who are elected.

Don't think for a minute that I'm not challenged by this thought. I have grown up in our denomination, which functions according to a congregational style of government in the local church. I've done my best to work within this framework of governance but I've also always believed that something wasn't quite right.

My concerns become clearer when I check the blueprint regarding the church. Nowhere in the Bible do we read about official or executive boards. Nominating committees are not to be found. Leadership positions are not to be granted due to popularity or because no one else will take them. Deacons aren't expected to make elder-type decisions, but this is unavoidable in a church that has no elders. Elders (viewed as a shepherd in 1 Pt. 5:1-2) are called to lead the sheep and not the other way around. Too many pastors have entered a meeting of the official board in fear and trembling, hoping that what God had laid upon their hearts won't be "shot down" by the sheep.

One thing's for certain, the church is not a democracy. God's will is not something we vote on, but rather it is something we recognize as it is revealed through the leaders that God has raised up in the church. Where have we gone wrong? In my opinion, we have missed the one thing that makes all of this work according to the plans—Trust. We must trust the Lord of the Church that he will guide us according to the plans, and we must trust the leaders that God has raised up in the church.

According to the plans, God has raised up elders who teach (1 Tim. 3:2) and elders who administrate the church (1 Tim. 5:17) and some that do both. He has given us deacons who wait on tables (Acts 6:1-7, serve) and don't want to administrate and teach. Jim Collins, in his tremendous book, "Good to Great," identifies the fact that companies that move from good to great are led by trustworthy leaders. In addition, the company trusted them to lead. Could this be the time for the church to began to identify leaders who are trustworthy (not an official board) and allow them to lead as God leads them? I, for one, think it is. How about you?

A careful look at the text in Acts 6:1-7 reveals that the people brought a need to the attention of the leaders, but it was the leaders who made the decision for the church. Notice the response to the decision of the apostles to have certain people serve the tables (deacons) and others to "pray and study God's Word" (apostles). The word of God spread and the number of disciples increased rapidly. Interestingly, there were also priests who joined after this time. Could it have been due to the fact that they not only met Christ, but they realized they were going to be able to do the things God had called them to do?

One last thought about blueprints might be helpful at this point. In order to get finished with your building project, the building under construction has to be approved according to the blueprints. Can we truly expect God to approve of a church that is not built according to his blueprint? Could it be that we have missed out on much of the blessing and growth that God intended for the church because we have moved away from the blueprint and built our own version of the church? In the past, God has revealed himself to the church through godly leaders. The truth seems to be that we have inserted our own framework and expected God to bless it. What would happen if we give the church back God and let him run it? ✞

Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren II is pastor of West Jax AC Church, Fla., and serves as recording secretary of ACGC's executive council.

AGNTY	HHW	EHHIRT	AEISS	EFGS	AHIW	GHNSTT	EHOOR	EEHNO	AHIRU	ADMST	EOS	FJLM	AAIO
			■							■			■
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Drop the letters into the columns at the left in the correct order to read Proverbs 23:24 (NIV)



Cross out every other letter to read Exodus 20:12

CHIOBNROTRQYKOVULRNFGAATEHNEBRHAJNADX
YVOMURRIMAOLTCHIEURSSBOLTPHKARTYYIOXULMTASY
LLAICVDEPLAONNHGLIONWTKHAEMLBAQNDDFTIHJEU
LSOLRODEYNOUUTRXGIOSDNITSNGIILVAIJNBGPYZOOUU

Fill in the puzzle with the words below

3 letters
Eve

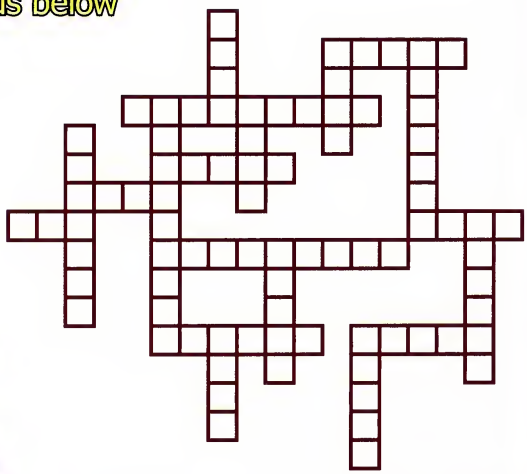
4 letters
Adam
Boaz
Leah
Mary
Noah
Ruth

5 letters
Isaac
Jacob
Jesse
Laban
Sarah

6 letters
Hannah
Rachel

7 letters
Abraham
Rebecca

9 letters
Elizabeth
Zechariah
Bathsheba





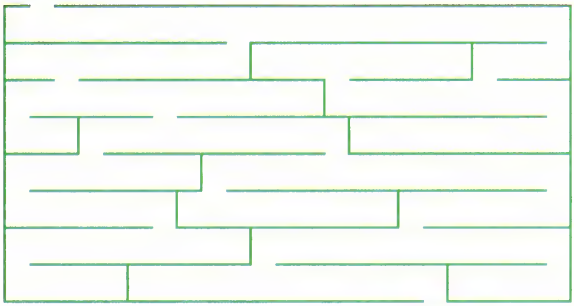
As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell



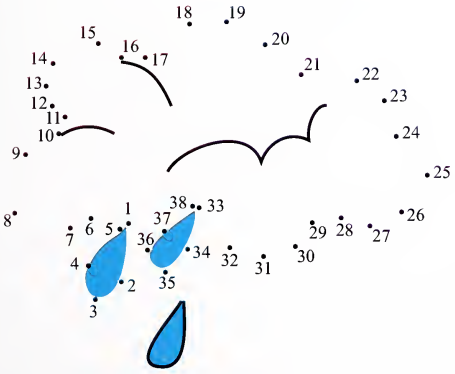
Can you help the girl get to the Mother's and Father's Day cards?

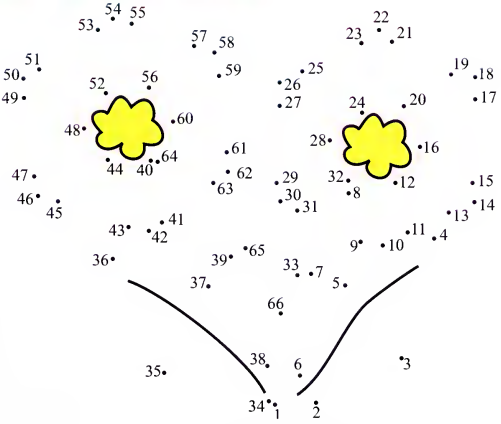




Connect the dots in the two pictures and unscramble the sentence below to see what happens in the Spring

ripAl owshser inbrg ayM wflorse.





He Keeps Me

by Libby Harren

My mother is not a person that you will ever read about in a history book. She didn't invent anything notable or discover any great cure. However, the legacy she leaves behind is just as worthwhile to many as the ones that receive accolades and awards. She leaves offspring, friends, and a church family who love her, and a world that is better because she spent time there.

My mother's love for her heavenly father was very obvious and she was very eager to communicate that love using another of her great loves—music. Oh, what memories flood my soul…

"Climb, climb up sunshine mountain, heavenly breezes blow …" I can still picture my mother sitting at our spinet piano singing that song along with many others. She spent hours and hours at that piano, crooning tunes from the hymnbook. I remember as a child getting somewhat tired of seeing her there. She would inevitably summon my sister and me to come sing along. "Oh rats, I gotta sing when I would rather be climbing a nice tree," was usually my sentiment. Typically, her beckoning won out, and I would stand begrudgingly beside the piano bench joining in the merry melodies.

Mother sang all the time. I remember hour upon hour of singing in the car when we took vacations. She would hum when she couldn't remember the words. She sang when it rained, when it snowed and especially when the sun shone.

SINGING



Margaret "Midge" Setzer Phillips

Now, I want you to realize that my mother's life was not all rosy and fun. Most people who lived her life would think they had little to sing about because my father was an alcoholic. Because of his addiction, her life was tough, but she never stopped believing that God was there for her. Through it all, his music gave her much comfort, and so she continued to sing. She always made the best of everything that life handed to her. Whatever happened, she still sang her songs to the Lord and expected us to sing along. It was her great love for the music of her God that followed her throughout her life, giving her strength and joy.

She spent hours and hours at that piano, crooning tunes from the hymnbook

As you read this, you may wonder if my mother is still alive. Well, yes and no. Alzheimer's has taken away most of what was Mom. She lives in an Alzheimer's unit in Asheville, North Carolina. She hasn't recognized my sister or me for the last couple of years. However, amazingly, she can still carry a tune, will join in when she hears a familiar hymn, and recalls many of the words. You see...

The Lord IS her strength and her song, and He has become her salvation. (Ps. 118:14) ✝

(This tribute was written in honor of Margaret Setzer Phillips, by her daughter, Libby Harren. Libby is the President of the Piedmont Conference WHFMS and attends the Calvary Advent Christian Church in Lenoir, North Carolina, where she serves as Sunday School Superintendent and pianist.)

WHFMS HONOR ROLL SOCIETIES

2004

Appalachian	*Piedmont*	Beaver Creek, Ferguson, N.C. Berea, Colletsville, N.C. -Macy Coffey Boone WHFMS, Boone, N.C. First, Concord, N.C. - Johnsie M. Braswell Circle Fellowship, Taylorsville, N.C. First ACC, Hickory, N.C. Central, Lenoir, N.C. - Faye Messick Circle Central, Lenoir, N.C. - Ruby Winkler Circle First ACC, Lenoir, N.C. - Hattie Steele Circle First, Morganton, N.C. Shiloh, Monroe, N.C. - Seena Helms Tabernacle, Lenoir, N.C. - Mary Cottrell
	Pocahontas	Adria, N. Tazewell, Va. Princeton ACC, Princeton, W.Va. - Mary Gilbert
	Virginia	Waynesboro, Waynesboro, Va. - Mary Schooler Lone Star ACC, Clifton Forge, Va. - Annie Gardner
	W. Virginia	Elmore Memorial, Charleston, W.Va. - Helping Hands
Central	*Missouri Valley*	Brays, Iberia, Mo. - Evening Circle Villisca, Villisca, Iowa - Evening Circle
	Prairie States	Aurora ACC, Aurora, Ill. ACC, Prophetstown, Ill.
	North Central	Magnolia ACC, Evansville, Wis. - Helpers Union Chetek ACC, Chetek, Wis. - Mary and Martha
	Ohio	Rockbridge ACC, Rockbridge, Ohio
Eastern	*Conn. & W. Mass.*	Faith Community, Windsor, Conn. Torrington ACC, Conn. - Barbara Connell Mission Soc.
	International	Faithful Friends, Beebe ACC, Stanstead, Quebec Danville WHFMS, Danville, Quebec

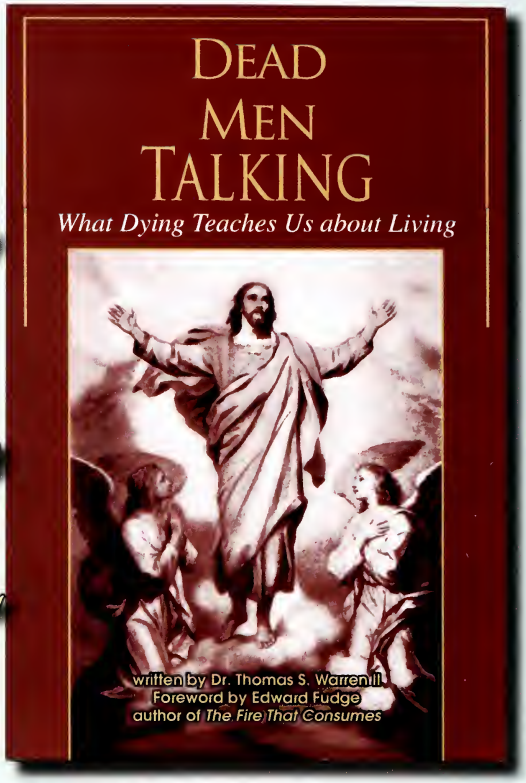
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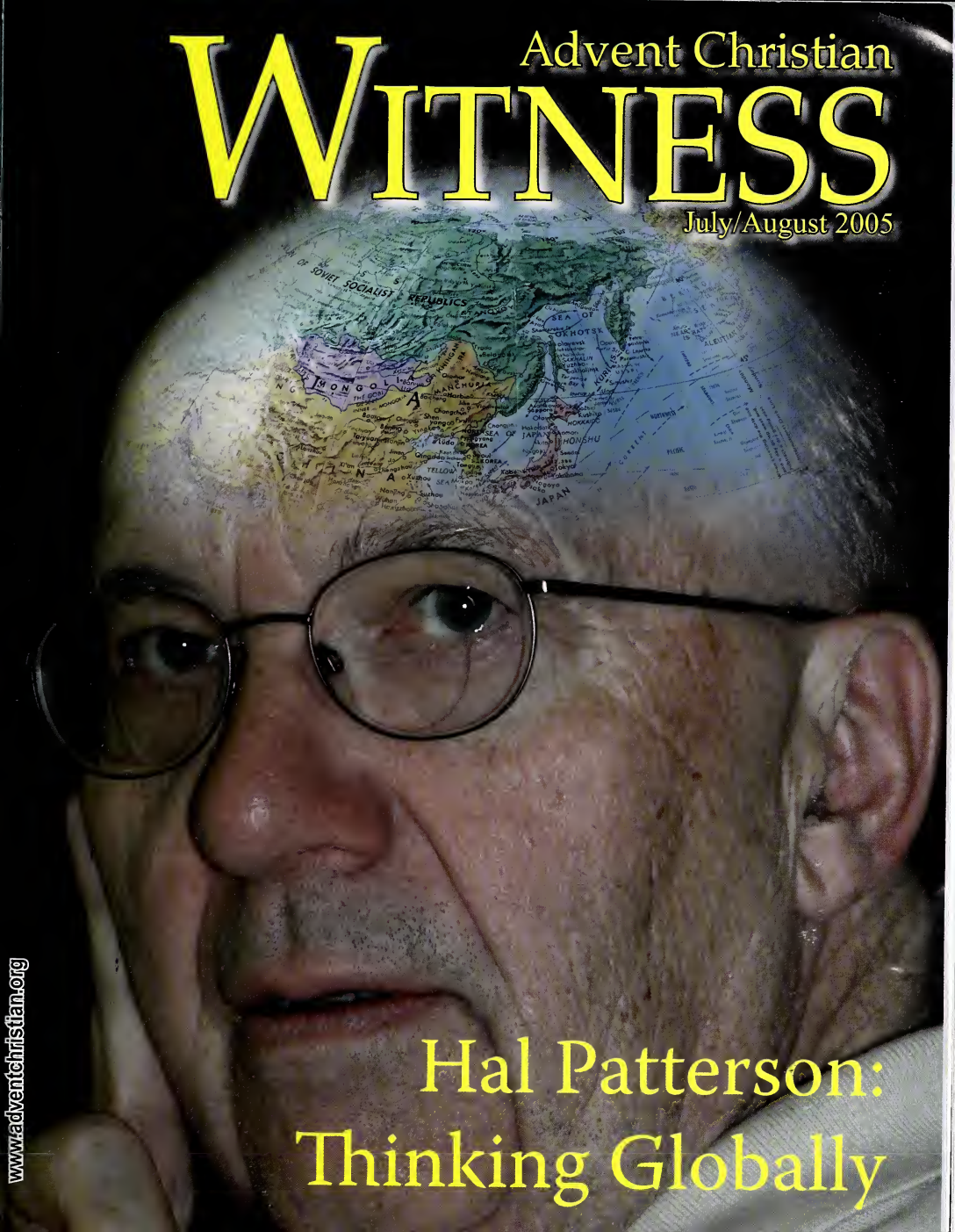
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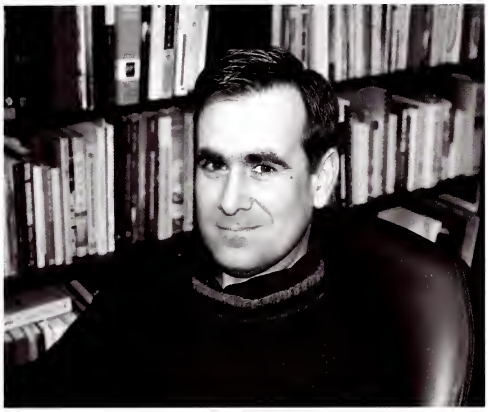
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From the Editor



Kathy and I were both stunned when the "lady" pulled up next to us and flashed an obscene hand gesture our direction. We were driving at a reasonable speed, we weren't in the passing lane, and no other car could be seen on the road. No offense could be found in my driving. That, and the fact that we were on a highway in rural Vermont made her aggressive behavior very hard to understand.

Then the rude woman's car passed and we saw her bumper stickers: "I'm pro-choice and I vote," "Against Abortion? Don't have one!" and "Keep Your Laws Off My Body!" Instantly, we knew our pro-life bumper sticker was the cause of her indignation.

I'm not a big fan of bumper stickers. The ones that try to be relevant usually seem trite or simplistic. Political stickers can be unnecessarily divisive. And we're not in the habit of trading cars each year, which means I'll be looking at anything I stick on my car for a long time – faded, peeling and sucking dry what little resale value my car might have.

So, it was against my natural inclinations that Kathy convinced me to put the pro-life sticker on our car. I consented because I shared her passion about the issue, and our home state was in the middle of a battle over parental notification. Besides that, the car was ten years old with 150,000 miles, and the sticker performed a useful function by covering one of the larger rust holes.

For the next decade or so after that incident, I refrained

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AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

by Clio Thomas

Rev. Clio Thomas was the pastor of the West Valley A.C. Church in Seattle, Washington for several years. Currently he is serving the denomination as the Asia Pacific Area Director. He also holds leadership roles in meetings with pastors, conferences and other leaders of the western region.

Four years ago — right after 9/11 — I went on a teaching trip to Africa with Frank Jewett. Since then, my concerns over certain issues regarding the North American Church have only intensified.

I do not intend to be critical of either the Church or of America. I love both very deeply, and I trust that it is out of this deep love that I am able to write and to be understood. My travels to Africa and Asia have been a sweet but jarring experience. What God is doing all over this planet is exciting — sometimes almost overwhelming. But what he is doing around the world, and how he is doing it, cause deep apprehension about our own methods, faith and practice. Let me explain in four areas of concern.



The concern is on what happens to us in worship rather than on what we are declaring about God...

Worship

First, I am concerned about what is happening in what we call worship. The word "worship" has the root meaning of the declaring of worth. The reality is that everyone worships someone or something. That which is most important in our lives is what we worship. What we worship is whatever dominates our thinking, our allegiances, our commitments. What has happened in much of the American church in recent years is that worship has become an activity — an activity we do once a week, often at 11 o'clock Sunday mornings.

Furthermore, worship has been marginalized even more by the focus on music, and whether or not we "like" the music. Even within the confines of music, for many folk the emphasis is on what we "get out of it." The problem with this is that it turns worship around. Worship is now dictated by what we like or don't like and what we get out of it. If worship is what the Bible calls the declaring of the worth of God, it is not what we get but what we give to him.

The concern is on what happens to *us* in worship rather than on what we are declaring about God — to whom all of worship should be directed. This is not merely on Sunday at 11, but in every moment of our lives. Otherwise, we begin to worship ourselves rather than the great almighty transcendent God, who has chosen to come to us in all of his love and grace. Presently, in many of our churches, God is formed in our image rather than us allowing him to form us in his image. This being the case, it's no wonder that so little change takes place in our lives. We are looking for what pleases us rather than what changes us.

Marva Dawn writes in one of her books on worship, "Worship should kill us." What she is saying is that worship should kill our selfishness, our arrogance, our sinfulness, and resurrect within us the holiness of Christ. She mentions the time someone was leaving after Sunday worship and told the pastor, "That was a wonderful sermon." His response was to the point, "That remains to be seen." Much of real worship will take place the following six days.

Another aspect of this whole matter on worship that is a concern is all the "I's, me's, and my's" found in many of our contemporary songs. When we are doing corporate worship, it should be all about him and us; not him and me. In our times of corporate worship we need to be brought together as a great community of believers of all ages who are celebrating God's greatness and goodness together, and who are being changed by the radical surgery of his Word, which is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." What all of us need is an encounter with the great and mighty God. Without this we walk in darkness, doing our own thing, living fitful and meaningless lives. God wants to infuse himself into his people through the power of his Holy Spirit, and this can happen only when we encounter him in new and fresh ways.

Second

The church

Acknowledge your role in the Body of Christ and give it your very best.

My second concern was captured in a comment made by a young Japanese pastor on my first trip to Japan. He said, "There is a crack in the Church." I asked, "What do you mean by that?" He answered, "We don't know what the Church is. We don't have a clear theology of the Church." He was right! This is true of church members generally, but my observation is that it afflicts us in North America more than in most places. Much of this stems from a "Marlboro man" view of American individuality ... "if I can't do it myself, it's not worth doing."

The heart of the pastor in America is torn in pieces by people who take the Church lightly. It is a heresy. We are not individuals. We are a Body. If anyone can find anything different than that in the Word, let them speak up. Otherwise, acknowledge your role in the Body of Christ and give it your very best. There are all-too-many Christians who don't care about being a part of the Body of Christ. They claim individual and personal salvation ... but that does not cut it. The rest of the Body is rent and torn by their spasmodic connections, stubborn actions and careless habits. The cause of Jesus suffers as people flit in and out of one church after another because they are "free individuals." We are not free individuals! On the contrary, we are a community of believers made free by the grace of Christ, built on the foundation of Christ and knit together by his presence.

One leading contemporary theologian, Jurgen Moltmann, writes in his book, "The Church In the Power of the Spirit," that American Christianity is smorgasbord Christianity. People change congregations at the drop of a hat. They don't like the preacher, don't like the music, had a falling out with one or more people or get tired of going to church, so they fly the coop. There is no loyalty, no accountability. There is never any reconciliation, which, incidentally, is at the heart of the Christian faith. Not to be reconciled to one another denies the very faith we espouse. Yes, there is a crack in the Church!

Beyond what is happening in local congregations due to lone ranger Christians is also the chasm that exists between us and the world Church. To be in Christ is to be linked up with the Abraham Davids, the Nathan Fernandos, the Rowena Baylons and the Reggie Christophers of this world. The term "global economy" has become a catchword these days. Yet, the Church of Jesus Christ has always been global. This is not new. It is not a 20th or 21st century phenomenon. Christ is at work reaching the whole world through his Church. We need to be aboard.

Third

Civil religion

We must always know where being a patriot and being a Christian begins and ends. The two dare not become the same.

My third concern is with "civil religion." What I mean by this is the growing connection between Christianity and patriotism. Just after 9/11, someone came to me and said "Why isn't the American flag displayed in our church building?" My response was, "The church is here to worship the one and only God, not a country." Now, let me be very clear about this. We have every right and duty to be proud citizens of this land and to hope and wish nothing but the very best for it and its people. I get tears in my eyes every time I sing or hear "The Star-Spangled Banner," but my knees buckle when I think of what we owe the God of our eternal salvation. There is a difference.

Martin Niemoeller was speaking in Seattle in the early 60s and was telling about how the Nazi flag and emblems began to appear in the established church in Germany in the late 30s and early 40s. Before long, the church had sold-out to Hitler, and all of us know the result. Niemoeller called the appearance of the flag in the church buildings the "abomination of desolation," and warned against that sort of thing in America. We must always know where being a patriot and being a Christian begins and ends. The two dare not become the same.

Sometimes the greatest patriots are the greatest critics. Consider Dietrich Bonhoeffer: he loved his God and his country so much that he dared to take a stand. Some of American Christianity has become so closely aligned with patriotism that is scares me. Politics needs to be informed by one's Biblical faith in God, not Biblical faith in God informed by politics.

Fourth

Commercialization of Christianity

Those of us in the northern hemisphere need to get back to basics of discipleship and costly commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

My fourth concern for the North American Church is the commercialization of Christianity. To see this at work all you have to do is visit a local Christian bookstore. A new book, Christianity Incorporated, exposes the marketing ploys of recent years such as exploiting the current interest in "self-worth" and "spirituality." These are often couched in Christian terminology but the end-result is anything but Christian. They are self-help programs rather than Christ-centered calls to commitment and devotion to Jesus. These are often used as ways to make people more effective for their companies or for enhancing their own financial and personal resources. In addition, one does not have to look very far to see how Christianity is exploited, even by companies in the business of supplying materials for churches and believers. Writers and musicians are pushed by publishers and producers to produce more and more, particularly when their names are well known. Thankfully, a few artists have rebelled, for instance, the late Rich Mullins. Seminars, tapes and videos roll out by the hundreds, competing with each other for the time and dollars of Christians. TV evangelists market their "Christian cruises." Activities and travels of Christian leaders are often financed through corporate sponsorships whose logos are splashed all over brochures.

Another book that has shaped my thinking in recent months is by the historian Phillip Jenkins. In his book, "The Next Christendom," Philip Jenkins looks at the Church as a historian rather than as a theologian, and suggests that the future of the Church will be shaped by what happens in the southern hemisphere. That is where God is doing some of his greatest work in our day. Theologian and missionary Lesslie Newbigin suggests that the western church has grown weak and flabby. Those of us in the northern hemisphere need to get back to basics of discipleship and costly commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

In Jesus' letter to the church at Philadelphia he says that he has set before them an open door. My own opinion is that we still have an open door before us to change our culture and to help reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We may have as long as a decade to enter that door and cooperate with Jesus in reaching this world with his grace and love. But, we must follow the admonition of the writer to the Hebrews when he wrote, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus." We must throw off everything that hinders and entangles and run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

I am hopeful about the future, that the American Church will rise with the worldwide Church and declare the Good News to a world in desperate need of the saving power of the Gospel. But, to do that, we must get our priorities straight and join the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in fulfilling the great commission by following the great commandment.✞

TRUE FREEDOM

By Oliver North



Chapter One

THE PROVEN PATHWAY TO FREEDOM

Lord, I seek you with all my heart,
with all the strength you have given me.
I long to understand that which I believe.
You created me in order to find you;
you gave me strength to seek you.
My strength and my weakness are in your hands:
preserve my strength, and help my weakness.
Where you have already opened the door let me come in;
where it is shut, open at my knocking.
Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

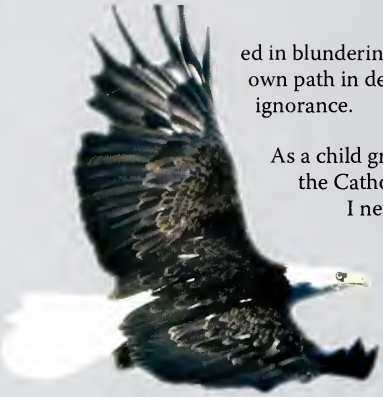
There I lay, writhing in the North Carolina sand. I couldn't feel my legs. Piercing pain gripped my back, as though someone had skewered me with a railroad spike. How could this happen...*now* of all times?

I wanted a medic and some quick relief.

But God was about to give me something better. In my pain-fogged panic, I had no way of knowing that my whole life would turn on this moment.

TUG-OF-WAR WITH G0D

God has protected and blessed me all my life. But for more than thirty years I failed to acknowledge His active, personal interest. Through all those years, He patiently coaxed me toward the pathway to true freedom (I can see that now), but I persist-



ed in blundering down my own path in determined ignorance.

As a child growing up in the Catholic Church, I never doubted God's existence, and I learned to respect Him deeply. From a distance.

Years later God showed that He was closer to me than I was willing to admit. My friends and I were driving through heavy snow late at night on a weekend ski trip. It was 1964, my first year at the naval academy. Everyone had fallen asleep...including the driver. I jerked awake just in time to see the headlights of the oncoming truck. Then we hit.

The carnage was terrible. One of my friends was killed, and the other three were badly mangled. In comparison, my injuries were relatively minimal—head injuries, crushed vertebrae in my lower spine, broken nose, broken jaw, broken leg, and one damaged knee. But my surgeries and recovery kept me down for months.

I fought my way back. Sure, I gave God His credit. During my stay at the naval hospital, I made it my daily habit to wheel into the hospital chapel to pray. And God healed me so completely, that four years later I won the brigade boxing championship. But my relationship with God was still one-sided—I sent up my requests, and He took care of me. I simply wasn't listening to what He was trying to tell me.

Prayer is like a two-way radio, which is designed both to transmit and receive. But my radio was stuck on "transmit." I thought, more than anything else, that my own dogged persistence had brought me back to health and allowed me to finish my academy training. I was determined to become a marine, and I was sure no obstacle was insurmountable.

God stuck by me through my year in Vietnam, as I patrolled the so-called demilitarized zone. On several occasions, men standing right next to me were killed, while I was either untouched or back in action in very short order.

God also saved me from another kind of disaster. In my zealous commitment to the Marine Corps, I almost threw away two of His greatest gifts to me—my marriage and my family.

PRAYER....

- is like a two-way radio, which is designed both to transmit and receive
- is freely flowing, two-way conversation with a Person
- doesn't even require words
- is when I'm consciously *with* God
- is when I look to Him with an attitude of dependence
- involves intimate, heart-to-heart communion with God
- is the voice of faith...and the pathway to true freedom
- makes a difference *inside us*
- makes our hearts and minds become attuned to God's heart and mind
- liberates us to live as we were designed, in intimate relationship with God

In the early 1970s I found myself doing what I enjoyed more than anything else—training marines in Okinawa. When I wrote to my wife, Betsy, that I would be missing my second Christmas in a row with her and the kids, she took longer than usual to respond. In her next letter, she wrote, "I've had enough. I want a divorce. Here's the name of my attorney."

I tried to tell myself that I didn't care, that my work was the only truly important priority. But the honest part of me—the part that hurt so desperately—wouldn't buy it. The internal struggle took its toll. I ended up in the hospital, my exhausted body racked with bronchitis and my tormented spirit mired in clinical depression. I reluctantly submitted to psychiatric care and then marriage counseling, gradually recovering and ultimately reconciling with Betsy. But even through those excruciating days, I still imagined that my progress and my healing were the results of my own hard work.

One early promotion followed another, only because I was a good officer. Or so I thought.

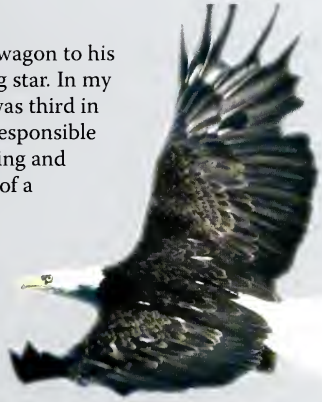
All the while, God was preparing my wake-up call.

DIVINE INTRUSION

By 1978, I had known Lieutenant Colonel John Grinalds for about three years. He was on the fast track through the ranks. Top of his class at West Point and highly decorated from his two tours of duty in Vietnam, he had gone on to become a Rhodes Scholar and White House Fellow and to earn a Harvard MBA.

Oh, and there was one other characteristic that set Grinalds apart from the rest. He was one of those "born-again Christians." Whatever that meant. Along with all the usual training and administrative manuals on his desk, he kept a Bible. Right there in plain sight. And he *read* it.

Grinalds was assigned as a battalion commander to the Second Marine Division, based at Camp Lejeune, and he honored me by asking me to come along as his operations officer. I was happy to hitch my wagon to his rapidly rising star. In my new role, I was third in command, responsible for the training and preparation of a two-thousand-man unit for deployment to the Mediterranean.



One morning, about two weeks before we were due to deploy, our battalion was conducting a training exercise. I had just adjusted the antenna on an armored amphibious vehicle and, spurning the ladder on the side, jumped to the ground.

Big mistake.

Instant memories of the 1964 car accident flashed through my pain-racked mind. I had reinjured my back in exactly the same place. Aside from the wish for unconsciousness, my one overriding thought was, *I just blew my chance to deploy with these men.* I knew from having experienced a similar reinjury in a 1973 parachute accident that I was due for at least two weeks of hospitalization and bed rest.

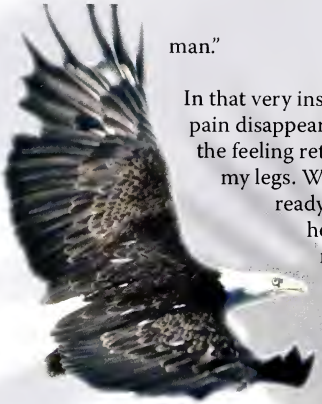
I lay writhing on the ground. Couldn't feel my legs. Lost control of my bladder.

Before a medic could arrive, John Grinalds showed up. Next thing I knew, he was putting his hands on my legs and saying, "I'm going to pray for you."

Pray? I thought. *I'm lying here in agony and you want to pray!*

But what I said aloud was, "Uh, Colonel, don't you think we could just do this the usual way? You know, get the helicopter, go to the hospital...?"

But Grinalds ignored me. He called out "Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Great Physician. Heal this



man."

In that very instant the pain disappeared. Soon the feeling returned to my legs. When I was ready, Grinalds helped me to my feet.

Astonished, I came out with one of the most inane utterances of my life. I said, "Thank you, sir."

At that, Grinalds grabbed me by my jacket and pulled me up to his face. "Don't thank me," he said. "Thank your Lord and Savior. *He* is the Great Physician. You have to turn to *Him*."

EMBARKING INTO FREEDOM

That incident was the two-by-four God used to break through my thick-skulled resistance. I had it in my head that freedom meant taking care of myse1f, forging my own path through the jungle of life's challenges. I knew that God was there to help, but I expected Him to follow my lead. What I came to realize was that He had been leading all along—and that I had not done well at following. I had been placing my faith in myself, yet He had been telling me over and over, "You'll only be truly free when you know and trust Me."

This realization profoundly humbled me. During the six months of our Mediterranean deployment, I participated in Bible studies with Grinalds and managed to read the Bible cover to cover. I learned that I had known a lot *about* God, but I had not *known Him* personally. I had sent a lot of orders in His direction, and He had even deigned to "obey" some of them. But I had been living in servitude to self; now I was discovering true freedom, living as I was designed to live—in relationship with God.

I had grown up believing in the vending machine concept of prayer—you put in your quarters, and you get back your selection, all neatly wrapped and sealed. But now I've come to understand that prayer is freely flowing, two-way conversation with a Person. In fact, prayer doesn't even require words.

When I'm consciously *with God,* that's prayer.

When I look to Him with an attitude of dependence, that's prayer.

Prayer at its best involves intimate, heart-to-heart communion with God, with or without words.

My friend Jarod came to this realization the day he slammed his thumb in his car door. The door was locked, his right thumb was stuck—sending frantic pain signals to his brain—and his car keys were in his right pocket. As he gingerly reached across his body with his left hand, digging for his keys, his whispered plea was simply, "Lord." Both he and God knew exactly what he needed at that moment. More words were superfluous.

John Bunyan, seventeenth-century author of *Pilgrim's Progress,* wrote, "The best prayers have often more groans than words."

FAITH AND TRUE FREEDOM

Closely related to prayer is the concept of faith—a concept that is widely misunderstood. Some people think faith is a power we somehow stir up within ourselves, and when we somehow muster enough of it (however much "enough" is), God responds and answers our prayers. But according to the Bible, faith is an attitude that acknowledges my utter powerlessness—my need to depend on God (see John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer is the voice of faith...and the pathway to true freedom.

But that won't make much sense unless we understand freedom, which can be conceived in a

variety of ways. There's the physical freedom that comes with a healthy body and independent movement. There's political freedom, which has always meant so much to me. But we in the United States of America enjoy political freedom only because our nation's founders had appropriated something even more basic, which for the purpose of this book we will call *true freedom.*

True freedom is the opposite of arrogant self-determination. It is submission to God's will. When I enthrone my own will and pursue my own "best," I severely limit myself. When I obey God, I open myself to His unlimited blessing. Jesus Himself said that if you obey His teachings, then "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

How can you learn to trust God enough to submit yourself to His will? Only by growing to know Him. Only by living life in conversation with Him. Only through a lifestyle of prayer. Your Creator and Lord wants to relate to you as Friend and Father. He made you for one primary purpose—to live in intimate relationship with Him. When you fulfill that purpose, you find true freedom.

Prayer makes a difference *inside us*—through prayer our hearts and minds become attuned to God's heart and mind, and we begin to think what He thinks and desire what He desires.

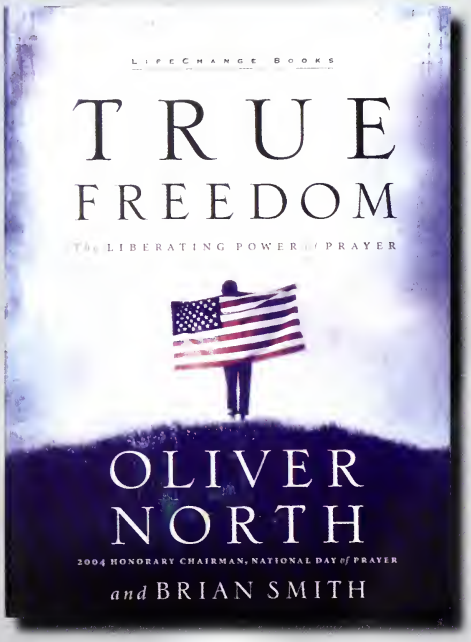
It's been said that if you've only seen an eagle in a cage, you've never seen an eagle. An eagle was meant for the wide skies and the cold winds of the heights. Just as the eagle was meant to cast himself freely upon the wind, so we were meant to cast ourselves on God, the Mighty One whose hand unrolled those skies like a parchment. We were not designed to be enslaved to self, but to soar freely according to His purpose and design.



We are God's, and only He can sustain our flight.

PRAYER PRINCIPLE #1

Prayer liberates us to live as we were designed, in intimate relationship with God.✝



Prayer may be your way out of captivity. Sharing his personal experiences and the engaging stories of others, Lt. Col. Oliver L. North USMC (Ret.) uses scriptural truths to illustrate the powerful liberating effects of prayer.

GOOD BATTLE, WRONG FLAG

By Larry Knowles

Imagine receiving a mail flyer one day that asked you to add your name to a full page ad in the local paper. The ad's purpose was to make a public statement about our society's need for:

1. Restoration of school prayer
2. A commitment by parents to teach their children that faith and perseverance is honoring to God
3. A commitment on the part of married couples to strengthen their marriage and live sacrificially for each other
4. A return to moral values of personal integrity and character in life and work
5. Renewed consideration of the plight of the poor, and generous giving to their needs
6. Repentance over the plague of abortion rampant in America



My response to such an invitation would initially be one of interest. Something inside me would say, "Hey, this sounds good. Someone's taking a stand for the Lord!"

But what if, at the end of the flyer, the author signed off as a member of "Concerned Muslims for America." My enthusiasm would cool quickly as I muttered an "oops."

What makes us and our message different is the stunning uniqueness of Jesus ...

In one sense my initial enthusiasm would be understandable. We're all weary of the decline in righteousness and truth in our nation. It's natural to be encouraged by the sound of a call to arms in the pursuit of personal and societal virtue.

But my initial reaction also reveals a common slip we make as Christians: that of seeing the restoration of public morality as a top priority for the church.

Important as a "return to values" is, it can't be the highest of our ideals and the driving force behind our engagements. It's not the main point. If all we have to offer the world is a way to develop more "integrity" and "character" in our families and our culture, then we're really no different than other religions (who, actually, often do it better than we do).

What we have in Jesus is " ... not a way for bad pepole to become good, but for dead people to become alive."

The church's main point isn't so much a point as it is a person: Jesus Christ. What makes us and our message different is the stunning uniqueness of Jesus, or as Jonathan Edwards calls it, the "diverse excellencies" found in him and through him.

What we have and what we offer in Jesus is not (at first) a way to become moral people, but pardoned people. What we have and offer isn't (at first) a road map to integrity, but the very righteousness of Christ credited to us. And while genuine faith in Christ steadily leads to a more virtuous life, that virtue comes from being freed from the power of sin and empowered by the Holy Spirit — not by better law keeping or character development.

In other words, what we have in Jesus is "... not a way for bad people to become good, but for dead people to become alive" (a good quote from a preacher whose name I omit out of respect, after a moral lapse tarnished his career).

Saul of Tarsus, the premiere zealot for traditional values, eventually learned the same thing. "Christ is the end of the law so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). "Neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15).

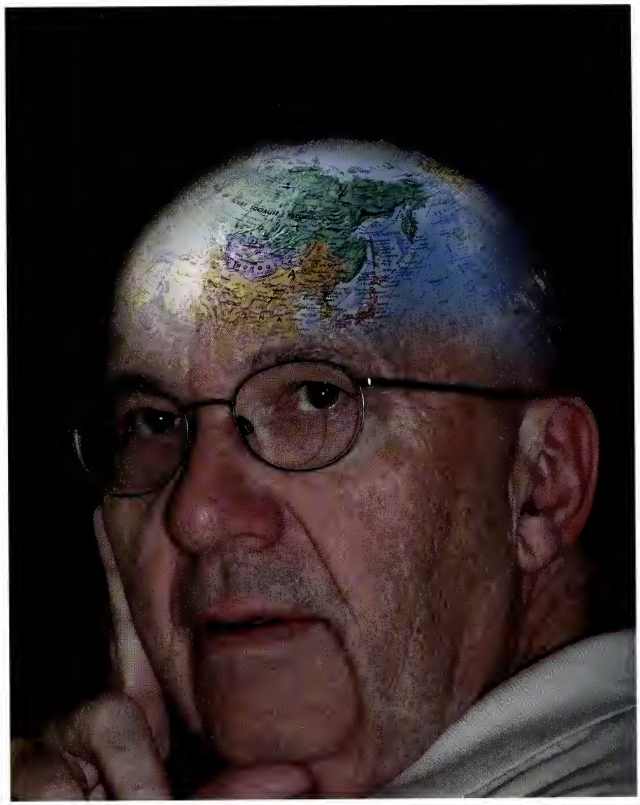
There's no doubt that we live in an age of moral decline, and that Christians need to take hard stands against the growing darkness. But let's remember to wave the right banner in the process. Zeal for things like truth, values, integrity and even God, just can't be our primary rallying cry — not in a religiously diverse society using the same terms.

Let the first and clearest proclamation of the church be this: the incomparable Christ, who makes right and empowers for right, all who believe.✝



Mr. Larry Knowles , Jr. has been the executive director of Vernon Advent Christian Home since 1983. He and his wife Joanne have four children: Kristen, Larry III, Katie, and Eli.

God's Global Gospel



by

Rev. Harold Patterson
Director of World Missions
Advent Christian General Conference

"Think Global!" leaped off the front page of the magazine at me as I walked into a bookstore recently. A little farther along, in the business section, there was a book entitled, *Think Global Strategies for Today's World*. After returning home and turning on the TV, I was struck by a package shipping service slogan that said, "Ship Globally! How we can help." As I reflected on these experiences all in one day, I realized that God had been "thinking globally" from the beginning of time, and that we have a global gospel to share with everyone.

Consider with me for a moment:

God's Global Problem:

The Bible says that *"all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, there is none righteous, no, not one."* From the mountains of Tibet, to the sands of the Sahara, to rural villages and to mighty cities, all men are sinners before God and, as such, lost to God's eternal promises.

God's Global Passion:

The Scripture says that, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* What a wonderful message to tell everybody in the world that God loves them. He has loved them from eternity. He cannot love them more than he loves them right now. God is a loving, compassionate God.

God's Global Provision:

To meet man's need, God provided his own son. The Bible says that Jesus Christ was the provision or payment, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. Every man, woman, and child that ever lived can be the recipient of God's forgiveness if they would only ask. The offer is still good today.

God's Global Proclamation:

As Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem, we are commanded to proclaim God's love, forgiveness, and conditions to all men everywhere.

God's Global Program:

To share this wonderful news, God has commanded that, therefore, we are to *"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."* Discipleship is God's program where each believer would disciple another believer, who in turn would disciple others. Groups of people are to do the same — disciple all nations or ethnic groups — as our commission. This is what is happening through the Advent Christian church around the world. We are learning obedience through the great discipling commission. As we are going in everyday life, we are to make disciples.

God's Global Prophecy:

When asked about his return, Jesus would say that *"this gospel of the kingdom would be preached unto all the world, to every nation or ethnic group, and then the end would come."* Christ's return is tied directly to the Great Commission. We are to declare that, and then his soon return will be on us. This is truly why the time remaining is short.

God's Global Prospect:

John the Revelator, in his Revelation from Jesus Christ, takes us to the end of time where we would see *"a great multitude that no man could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne in the front of the Lamb, wearing white robes, and shouting, salvation belongs to our God!"* God's Global Program, put in operation before the foundation of the world, will be successful, with millions — beyond number — worshipping him throughout eternity.

God's Global Promise:

"Whosoever believeth on the name of the Lord should be saved, and he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." God's Global invitation is for everyone to call upon the name of the Lord, claiming the virtues of Calvary for their salvation.

God's Global Plea:

"Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Men, women, and children will be lost, not by the great or little amount of terrible deeds they have done, but by their refusal to accept a lovingly offered pardon of salvation through Jesus Christ.

God offers this to you today. Will you receive it today, and participate in God's wonderful blessing forever?✝

LIFT



Down in the Dumps

By Josh Tate

I stood there with a disgusted look on my face as a fluid consisting of old eggs, roast beef, rotten vegetables, coffee grounds, and what I think was two-week-old potato salad ran down the front of my Camp Maranatha sweatshirt and collected in foul-smelling puddles at my feet. "I hate the dump," I murmured to myself as I shook icky gook from my hands and removed my soiled sweatshirt.

The trash bag, which I had been hefting, was one of those 45-gallon monsters that service the camp's kitchen. It had been ensconced amongst its slimy brethren in the mysterious depths of the camp's trash trailer for nearly two weeks. From experience I knew that when you are tossing a bag of that size, you must muster all of your strength. Then in one smooth motion, pull it from its berth and hurl it towards the dumpster. This is the best way to minimize contact with the bag and gain sufficient momentum to carry it all the way to its destination. This I had learned over the course of many successful dump runs, and I had executed exactly the same maneuver on many occasions without incident. But this time was different. When I pulled the bag from its slimy, dripping nest, the jagged end of a broken broom handle caught against it – gutting it like a fish. It was too late. The bunched muscles in my arms, back, chest, and thighs had already committed to the throw, and with all of my strength I brought the compromised bag up to chest level. At that very moment the coffee filters and spaghetti, which a second earlier had been pressed against the opaque inner lining of the trash bag, spilled forth. The space within the trailer was too cramped and mobility too constricted to avoid being covered with the stuff.

I was in a dark mood as I finished unloading the trash trailer. I couldn't escape the sickly sweet trash smell, which had soaked into my clothes. I thought about all the people who had so carelessly thrown things into that trash bag, and I secretly blamed them for what had happened. It didn't make sense, I know, but I did it anyway.

ED UP

On the drive home the smell emanating from my sweatshirt, which was wadded up on the passenger side floorboards, forced me to roll down my window. As the road climbed its way towards town and back to camp, the Lord reminded me of Romans 5:8 that says, "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us," and also 1 John 2:1-2 that says, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

I thought about how God came down into the trash trailer of this world and willingly and intentionally took my sins upon himself – the whole stinking mess of my life, which, if it were written out on the pages of this magazine, would cause me to slink off in shame and never be heard from again. I thought of all those secret shameful things. All the harm I've inflicted on others. All those evil thoughts I harbored and acted upon. All of it spilling forth from my life like a ruptured trash bag, and running over Christ. Him stinking of me. Stinking of my sin. Not only my sin however, but the sin of the whole world. The whole landfill! And he didn't do it because it was his job, or because he had to. No, he did it because he loved us. He loved us even though we were an oozing, putrid sack of sin. He didn't try to minimize contact with us either, but came down among us. He clutched us to him in a loving embrace, and became trash in our place. What a God we serve!

Lord, I am so unworthy of your sacrifice on the cross, and I am amazed that you love me. I owe you everything, and I offer you the meager sum of who I am. Take me, Lord and use me. It is my greatest desire to serve you, and there is even satisfaction in getting dirty in your service.✞



Josh Tate is the Assistant Director of Camp Maranatha in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California. He graduated from Houghton College with a major in Business Administration. Prior to going into full time ministry at the camp, Josh was a police officer for the City of St Albans in Vermont. He and his wife, Sarah,have a two-year-old son, Bowden, and are expecting another baby in July.



In June of 2004, Rev. Adrian Shepard retired from the full-time pastoral ministry. At his farewell ceremony he shared a poem he had written for his wife, Joyce, years earlier. Joyce responded with her own verse.



To A Wife

The sun is silent and the road to Lenox is lonely,
  Wheels are bounding on an uneven road.
White Birch bark against the background of evergreens
  Up in the sky a silvery, silky moon shines
Sometimes a stark encircled face,
  But sometimes as fingers reaching through a forest.
To the one side a mountain stands with sticks reaching up.
  To the other side a stream trickles along.
Shadows of trees lay across the snow covered ground.
  Two lovers ride hand in hand.

My mind has been at work with churches and people.
  My mind ponders the tasks and the problems.
My heart wonders about the will of God.
  The new days ahead may hold unprecedented pressures.
Life could become unbelievably burdened.

But suddenly rest surges through the soul.
  The awareness of love sinks into my being.
The sounds of home flow through my symbolic ear.
  The fulfillment of a family rests in my heart.
The one who is my wife is with me in spirit.

The lonely road to Lenox has become a lovely road.
  The uneven path is now traveled by a serene soul.
Solitude is not sadness.
  You have made a difference on the road that I now travel.

To a Husband

Two lovers riding hand in hand
Black and golden heads together, anticipating life
Wond'ring about the future as we traveled man and wife
And how God would use us as we followed His command.

Peaceful days of young love, but that surely changed
As four boys tumbled to our nest
Little League baseball, wrestling, football … all the rest …
Our lives were truly rearranged.

They brought us a wealth of laughter
And more than our share of tears
God helped us in our sorrows, and led us through our fears.
We'll trust Him always through this life and in the one hereafter.

"Stick with me, Baby, and I'll show you the world,"
(Words you long ago said)
New Zealand, Hawaii, Israel … all places we were led
Scenes from Auckland to Jerusalem through our mem'ries are unfurled.

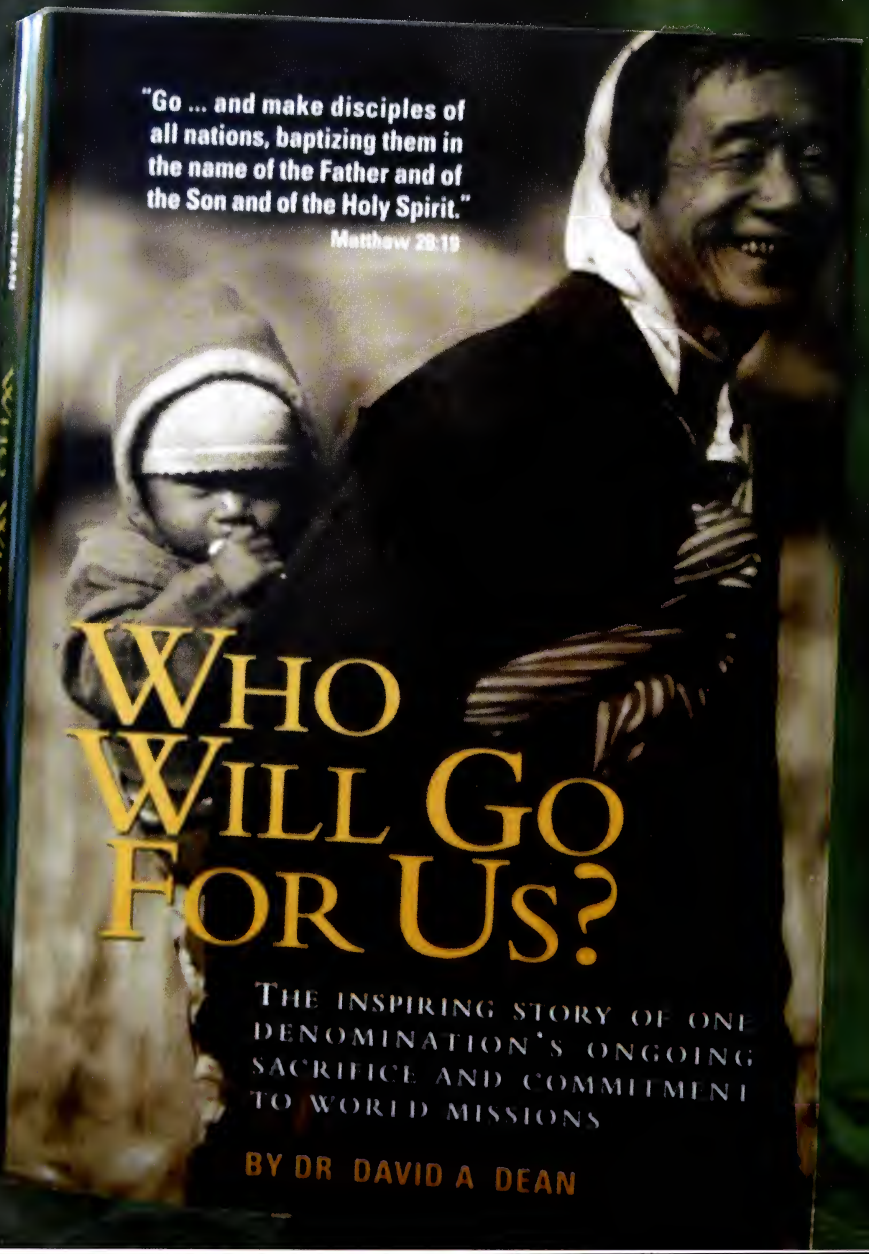
Two lovers are still riding hand in hand.
Our hair is pretty gray now,
And wrinkles crease our brow,
But serenity reigns as we still sense God's command.

……

Adrian, you have made out of the lumber of my life,
A temple, not a tavern
Thank you for your wisdom and your love,
Thank you for being a man I can respect
You have made a difference in the road I have traveled.
Joyce, May 2004✞

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(Editorial continued)
from applying another sticker to any vehicle. Sometimes I was tempted by a political cause, or when a humorous message caused me to laugh and made me think about sharing the fun. There's no doubt that the world deserves to be notified that my three children are honor students at Wheaton Home School Academy. Nevertheless, my bumper remained pristine ... until now.

I've begun hawking bumper stickers, and you shouldn't sell something you don't believe in. So my 1987 BMW now sports a blue and yellow sticker with a very brief message: "Maybe Today."

Recently, I've been impressed with the impact Jesus' second coming had on our Advent Christian ancestors. Convinced of his seemingly imminent return, early Adventists endured extreme hardship in order to get the word out. Some literally sold the farm to fund publication efforts. Expecting Christ's soon return — and Judgment Day — motivated them to live pure and holy lives. Everything they did was flavored by the overwhelming consideration of their Savior's sudden appearing.

One hundred fifty years later, I'm not convinced Advent Christians still operate with quite the same mindset. But we should, if we remember that Jesus is coming back unexpectedly ... maybe today.

Nothing else can change my outlook more dramatically than knowing Jesus will surely return ... maybe even today. All of life's hardships will be ended ... maybe today. My personal struggles and feeble attempts to live like Jesus will be over ... maybe today. Opportunities to invest my time and resources in kingdom work will be forever lost ... maybe today.

"Maybe Today" was once the heartbeat of Advent Christians. Our denomination was founded on the once unpopular belief that Jesus would return unexpectedly to establish his eternal kingdom. Our missionary efforts, publication efforts, and evangelistic efforts were all driven by a desire to spread the message of hope before it was too late. This is the priceless heritage our forebears gave us, and it's the greatest legacy we can leave the next generation. The only lasting hope is found in Jesus' Second Coming.

So I've ordered a big bundle of "Maybe Today" bumper stickers. Everyone at the Triennial Convention was given a sample, and I'd like to sell one to every other Advent Christian in North America. I believe nothing will have more impact on our lives than a constant reminder that Jesus is coming again ... maybe today. Think of how it could alter the decisions you make, the activities you pursue, and the habits you nurture.

Someone asked me why I didn't include the phrase "Jesus is coming back ..." on the stickers. For one thing, too many words make it hard to read. But, more importantly, I like the fact that it may raise a question. If someone becomes curious and asks, "What's 'Maybe Today' supposed to mean?" it will provide a great opportunity to share the message of the Lord's return and how they can be ready.

So far, "Maybe Today" hasn't been adopted as the official motto of A. C. General Conference. But I'm convinced it should be the "prime directive" governing every Advent Christian's heart. Jesus *is* coming back, and that Day will bring the fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams. Every tear and sadness will be forever forgotten. Maybe today!✞



To order your "Maybe Today" bumper sticker, please call Venture Bookstore at 1-800-676-0694, ext. 251. Cost is 75¢ each.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Glenn Rice

What's in a phrase? According to an article I read, the answer is "everything." That may be disputable with some phrases, but one phrase in particular conveys a rather harmful message. The words "I could care less" can be rather harsh, especially when these words are used in the church. When people in the church stop caring for others, we are in a heap of trouble. It happened at Corinth, and it can happen in the church today.

Paul expresses his concern about the Corinthian Church (1 Cor.11). Called to impact a city of 500,000 with the transforming power of the Gospel, the Corinthian Christians failed to do so because they were preoccupied by caring for themselves. Paul reveals the problems that plagued them: their indifferent manner, disregard for the church, and the way they humiliated one another. Paul's concerns were centered on the practice of the Lord's Supper. When people ate, they shared their food only with their friends and not the whole body. Some in the church had little and were neglected, while some blatantly overindulged! These actions made a mockery of the death of Jesus.

Jesus died that people might be reconciled to God. In Christ, we become one and are called to live as one in him. This requires that believers truly care for other people, which is why an "I could care less" attitude is disruptive and destructive in a local body. What's more, if you *could* care less you probably *will* care less in time! That outlook is dangerous to the well-being of any assembly of believers!

The Church is called to be a community that cares. This is a different mindset from the world around us. Christians must have a genuine interest in others – not just a select few – but all whom the Lord has called us to love. And this is exactly what the world needs to see!

As Advent Christians we have a tremendous opportunity! There are people around us every day who need to know that someone cares. Your care may be expressed in one of many different ways. It's not *how* we care that matters so much; it's *that* we care enough to minister to others in Jesus' name. As the Holy Spirit works through you, people will not only know that you care, they will have the chance to know that God cares. May God give you the desire to be a person who truly cares!✞

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner

Now and then I hear a worship leader urge everyone in the congregation to raise their hands as they pray or sing praises to God. Sometimes he may refer to Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2:8 to support his request:

> ***"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling..." (ESV).***

Does that mean that there's only one acceptable position for prayer and worship? I don't believe so. Lifting one's hands was a common posture for prayer in the first century. (One way of doing that was to extend the forearms with hands about chest-height, and the palms up.) But what Christians do with their hands during prayer was not really Paul's point. To focus on that is to highlight a "cultural incidental." By doing that, we'll be concentrating on something that isn't very important in relation to the real point of the text.

It clearly seems that Paul was concerned about two things:

1. Paul wanted the church to make prayer a high priority.

"I desire then that in every place the men should *pray* ..." Just before that, he wrote, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:1-4).

Does your congregation regularly take time to pray for all kinds of people, in high and low positions? Do you pray for folks to hear the truth and be saved? Do you ask God to use government leaders and police to restrain evil and maintain peace? Do you expect God to impact the world by your praying? Or, do your prayers only concern things such as Aunt Susie's surgery, Grandpa George's gout, and asking for clear weather for the church picnic? Paul had a *world-changing* view of prayer, and he longed for fellow believers to catch that vision.

2. He was also concerned that their hands be holy hands.

Wherever one's hands may be during prayer, the important thing is that they have not been defiled spiritually by recent involvement with sinful activities — perhaps especially any activities connected to "anger or disputing" (cf. 2:8).

For example, you shouldn't punch your neighbor in the nose before you come to church, or punch someone at church. Never use your hand to slap a loved one's face, or to make obscene gestures when someone cuts you off in traffic. Never take a weapon in hand to harm someone, or to harm yourself. And don't use your hands to steal, or to involve someone in sexual immorality, etc.

Hold your hands where you like during prayer and worship. Lifting them up is certainly acceptable, but not mandatory. Just make sure that they're holy hands, i.e., *set apart* for godly purposes. And make sure that you pray!✞

(Tom serves as a chaplain in care centers, and as an assistant pastor with Crossroads Christian Church in Boise, Idaho

...things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

Break the code

■♌& ♦♒♏ ●♌❖♎ ♓♦ ♦♒♏ ♦□♓❖♓♦, ♋■♎

&♒♏❖♏ ♦♒♏ ♦□♓❖♓♦ ♌♐ ♦♒♏ ●♌❖♎ ♓♦,

♦♒♏❖♏ ♓♦ ♐❖♏♏♎♌❍. 2Corinthians 3:17

CODE

♋	=	A	♓	=	I	□	=	P
♎	=	D	●	=	L	❖	=	R
♏	=	E	❍	=	M	♦	=	S
♐	=	F	■	=	N	♦	=	T
♒	=	H	♌	=	O	&	=	W



Crypto-list

Figure out what each letter really is. Once you have figured out a letter, it remains the same throughout the whole list.

(Hint: look for double letters, patterns in letters, etc.) (I=U)

Patriotic Hymns

KLB HKGQ HRGDYCBO EGDDBQ

XP MVIDKQP, 'KAH VJ KLBB

GXBQAMG, KLB EBGIKAJIC

YVO ECBHH GXBQAMG

YVO VJ VIQ JGKLBQH

XADB BPBH LGSB HBBD KLB YCVQP

CAJK BSBQP SVAMB GDO HADY

NADY VJ KLB DGKAVDH

(Answers: The Star Spangled Banner, My Country 'Tis of Thee, America the Beautiful, God Bless America, God of Our Fathers, Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory, Lift Every Voice and Sing, King of the Nations)



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Find the two flags that are the same



Fill in the missing vowels to read the Bible verse.

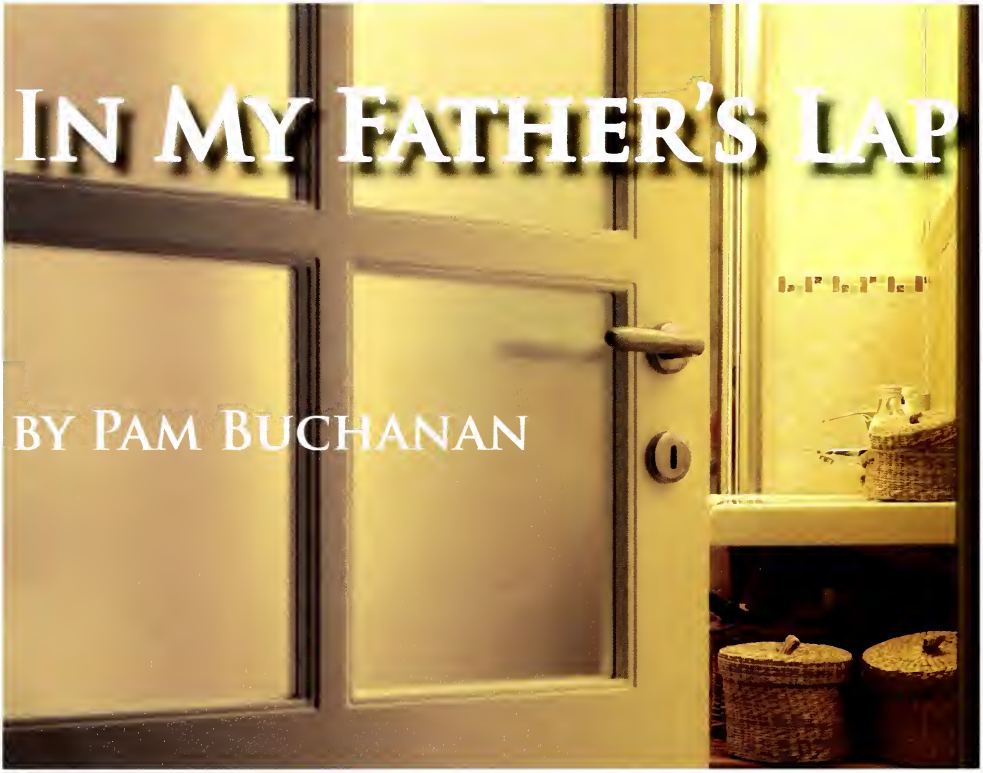
S__ __f th__ S__n s__ts
y__ __ fr__ __, y__ __ w__ll
b__ fr__ __ __nd__ __d.
John 8:36

Follow the directions to read the hidden message. (Some words may fit more than one category.) Read the remaining words left to right.

1. **Cross out all words that are things you can wear.**
2. **Cross out all words that are animals that fly.**
3. **Cross out all words that are things you can eat.**
4. **Cross out all words that begin with an s.**

shoe	freely	potato	gnat	you
sweater	eagle	have	lettuce	received
swing	chocolate	bee	stars	freely
snake	hat	give	butterfly	smile

(Matthew 10:8)



In My Father's Lap

by Pam Buchanan

In the book, "The Pressure's Off," author Larry Crabb, includes a personal illustration that has impacted my prayers. He tells a true story of being three years old and feeling "big enough" to go to the bathroom without assistance. Of course this is every mother's dream until the child gets locked in the bathroom, as had happened with Larry. He completed his "business" just fine, but then was unable to unlock the door to freedom. Larry reports a feeling of panic came over him as he contemplated spending the rest of his long life in the bathroom. He writes that his parents and probably the neighbors heard his screams. With his maternal parent at the bathroom door making all the proper inquiries about possible injuries and giving instructions for unlocking the door, the paternal parent was already on his way to the garage. Grabbing the ladder, (of course, the bathroom just had to be on the 2nd floor) he proceeded to enter little Larry's "prison" via the window. Larry's dad had no problem with his "adult" strength of unlocking and opening the bathroom door. Released from his prison, young Larry was on his way to play with a simple, "Thanks, Dad!"

Crabb expounds on this incident in his young life. "Many of us think this is how the Christian life is meant to work. When we get stuck, we should do all we can to get free. When that doesn't work, then we pray. God will hear our cry, show up, and unlock the door to the blessings we desire."

Can't you just picture us beating on the bathroom door, begging for the door to open, even after our Father has entered the room? So many times, I am so concerned with what I ***think*** I need or want, which is located on the other side of the door, that I miss the beauty and blessing of having my Father near.

This illustration brought a few questions to my attention. Do I desire the ***request*** more than I desire him and his presence? Could I be content if my Heavenly Father crawled into my "prison" with me but **did not** choose to open the door immediately ... or ever!? I am sure of the truth of scripture that promises ... God will never leave me nor forsake me. So my challenge is to crave his nearness more than the perceived blessing from outside. What if, when my Lord appears in the midst of my crisis, I am content with "crawling into his lap" to enjoy his comfort and peace, allowing him to decide if and when he will open the door.

As a result, as I grow, I want to place a greater desire for his presence at the top of my prayer list. "Lord, allow me to *come sit with you*, even in the middle of the storm, and as you bestow upon me the blessings of the desires of my heart, I will know that they are only *icing on the cake*!"

Above all else, I desire that "I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).✞

For those of us who are parents, we can identify with wanting to give our children "good gifts." How much more our Father who is in Heaven wants to bestow blessings upon us as his children. But as an earthly parent, I do realize that my desire to give my children something special heightens when their attitude is one of submission. Not many of our children have ever told us, "Forget the Christmas presents this year. Instead, let's just enjoy each other this year." How refreshing that would be to us and even more so to our Heavenly Father.



There have been times in my Christian walk when I wanted to be on the other side of that door so badly that I was willing to walk through the door, leaving my Lord behind. In my selfish pursuit, I have stepped outside of his apparent will. As I ponder this thought, I am humbled and grateful for the times he has graciously kept me in his care even though I followed my own path.

Where in the World Are You Going?

by Allison Hall



Allison Hall, daughter of David and Karen Hall, grew up in the Princeton, W.Va. A.C. Church. She married Christopher Hall, pastor of the Villisca, Iowa A.C. Church. She has a Masters of Social Work and presently works for a Mental Health Agency.

It is an interesting combination to have your husband also be your pastor. Sometimes I find myself more focused on the dance of being a pastor's wife than on the message my pastor is speaking. This Sunday morning was different. We gathered to end Penny Crusade, try our sea legs on land after leaving the M.S. Sonshine, and praise God we exceeded our goal! We also circled around one of our church's daughters, laid hands on her, cried, and prayed as we let her get on a real plane to South Africa.

Isn't it like God to set that stage? He set up a perfect way to wrap up Penny Crusade by sending out a missionary. So we placed our hands on her, prayed and released her. Although she is not my biological daughter, it was hard to let her go. My husband read from Acts 2:17-"and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." They shall speak God's words to everyone. Her "everyone" this summer is a group of teenage mothers in Durban, South Africa. Her "everyone" this past week has been a small town in Iowa where EVERYONE claims her as their own. Tomorrow her "everyone" will be her family — her mom and sisters. Her "everyone" will also be passengers in airports, on planes, and in restaurants. Yesterday, she was my "everyone."

I watched as she sat on our couch, drinking sweet

tea and eating cookie dough. I listened as she discussed side effects from her malaria medication. I cried as I wrote her a card. I imagined her holding hands with God and walking through a sea of people with HIV.

How can I be so proud of her going and yet want to make her stay all at the same time? God's got her. I know that. I believe that. I want him to have her. She is safer with him in South Africa then she would be with me in Villisca. She has felt a calling there for years. It is amazing how God worked it out for her to be there this summer.

The scary part for her is, she does not know what she will face once she arrives. Nor do I know, but I do know who those teenage moms will face. They will see a blonde American girl with more love in her eyes than most have in a lifetime. They will see God's fingerprints wherever she touches and a peace they cannot describe. They will also see a driven, well-defined passion for them to meet her Savior. I believe many will see God more clearly this summer through her.

So ... we will miss her. We will pray and look forward to August when we can hear her stories of God and see her pictures of the people he touched. I also hope *I* can share stories with her of God touching people. I'm not going to Africa, but I will be where God has placed me.

You will be where he has placed you. We do not know who we will face, but we do know who people will see when they face us. I hope they see a love in my eyes for their Savior. I pray he will allow me to show others more of him during the summer.

If you are heading out of the country this summer for mission work, may God tightly hold your hand, your life, and your heart. May those who he brings across your path know him better because he spoke through you. And, if you are home for the summer, taking part in your daily routine, may God tightly hold your hand, your life, and your heart. May those who he brings across your path know him better because he spoke through you. May we all know we are where we are for purposes only God knows, but they are still purposes. Our calling remains the same, "Love God and love your neighbor."

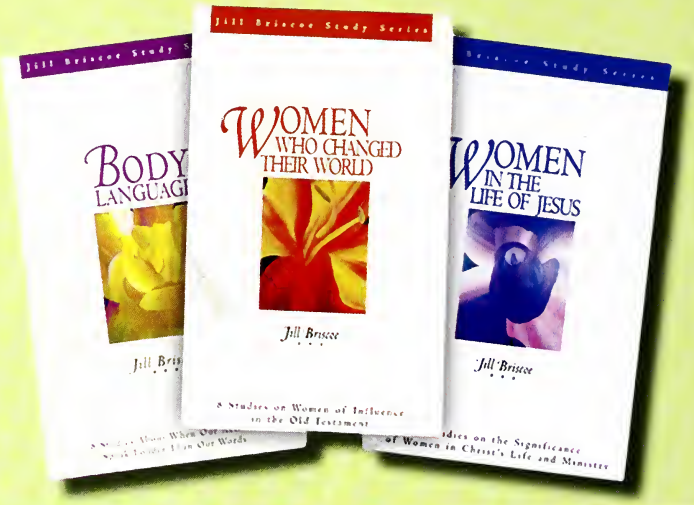
It really does not matter if your neighbor is in South Africa or America. It also does not matter where you are. God commands us to love. Trust God. Trust his love for you while remembering he also passionately loves everyone you meet. Allow him to love those around you through you.



While you love, please say a prayer for Leah, her family, and all who are crossing her path and yours. She is so gifted and so are you.✞

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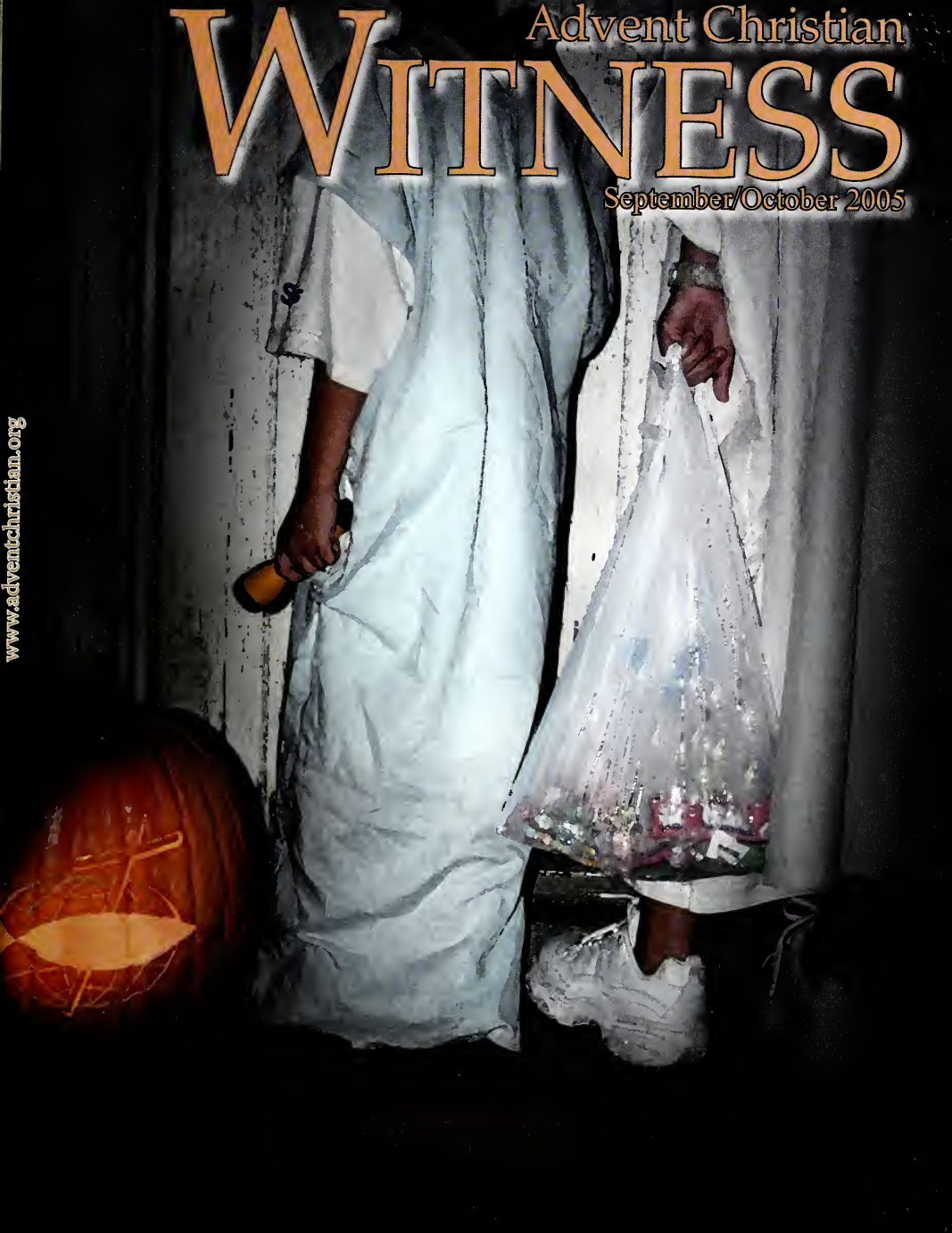
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From the Editor



My third boat

Anything Worth Doing ...

Some of the best advice I've ever read came from a boat-building book. The author, a well-respected craftsman and architect, encouraged neophyte boat-builders with the words, "Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly... until you can do it well." Looking at the complex shapes and procedures involved in building most boats will discourage almost any first-timer. The author's point was simply that if a person waits until he can do something perfectly, he will never do anything. Practice makes perfect. But practice starts with poor attempts.

(Editorial Continued on page 25)

Oops!

Several readers brought to our attention an error in the biographical information of one of the authors in the last issue of the AC Witness. We contacted the author who graciously gave us the corrected information as follows: Larry Knowles serves as President of Advent Christian Retirement Communities, comprised of Vernon Advent Christian Home (Vernon, VT) and Meetinghouse Village (Kittery, ME). The Executive Directors at these communities are, respectively, Brad Ellis and Barbara Dubois. ACRC was established in 2002 to provide a single identity in the denomination, but is governed by the same board that historically has overseen Vernon Home and Meetinghouse Village.

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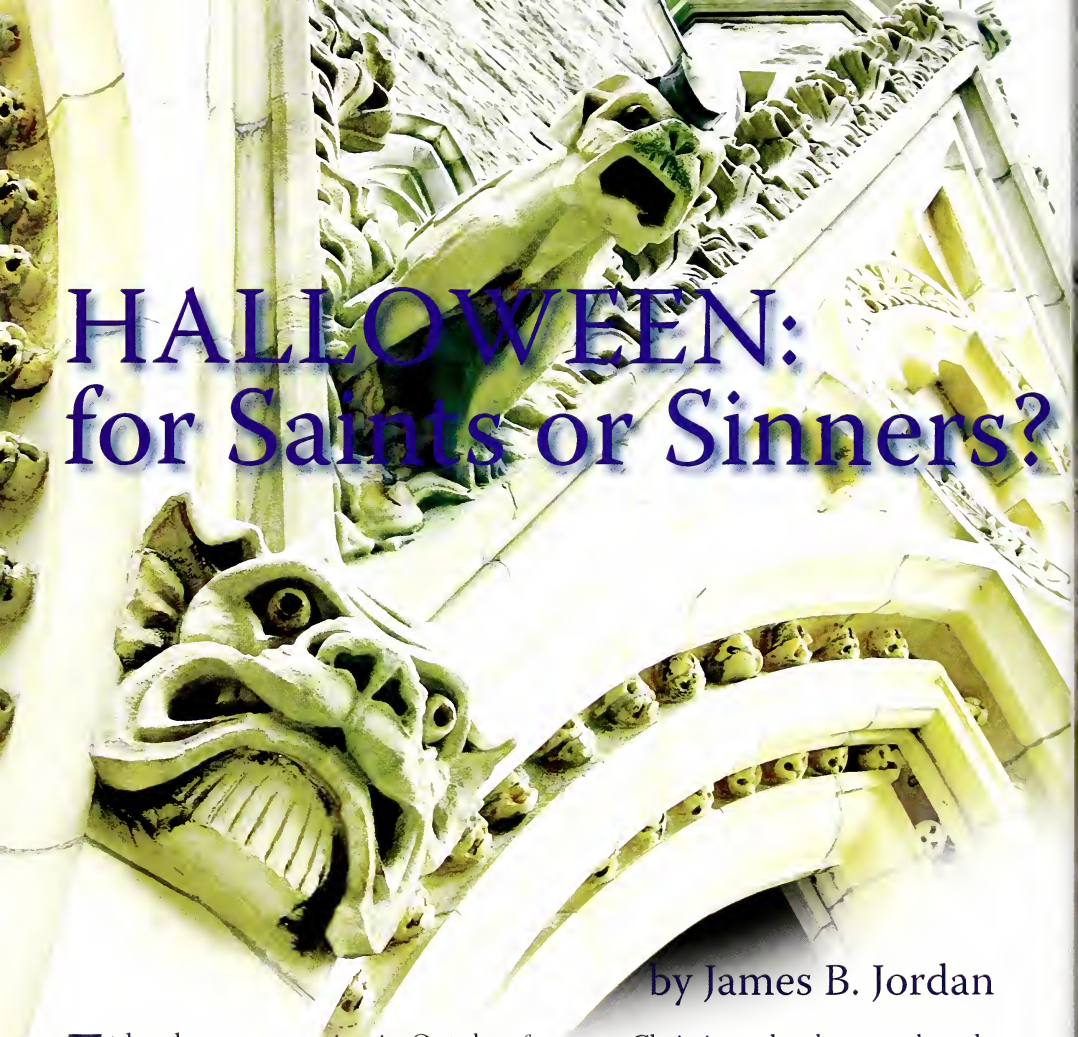
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HALLOWEEN: for Saints or Sinners?

by James B. Jordan

It has become routine in October for some Christian schools to send out letters warning parents about the evils of Halloween, and it has become equally routine for me to be asked questions about this matter.

"Halloween" is simply a contraction for All Hallows' Eve. The word "hallow" means "saint" in that "hallow" is just an alternative form of the word "holy" ("hallowed be Thy name"). All Saints' Day is November 1. It is the celebration of the victory of the saints in union with Christ. The observance of various celebrations of All Saints arose in the late 300s, and these were united and fixed on November 1 in the late 700s.

The origin of All Saints Day and of All Saints Eve in Mediterranean Christianity had nothing to do with Celtic Druidism or the Church's fight against Druidism (assuming there ever even was any such thing as Druidism, which is actually a myth concocted in the 19th century by neo-pagans).

In the First Covenant, the war between God's people and God's enemies was fought on the human level against Egyptians, Assyrians, etc. With the coming of the New Covenant, however, we are told that our primary battle is against principalities and powers, against fallen angels who bind the hearts and minds of men in ignorance and fear. We are assured that through faith, prayer, and obedience, the saints will be victorious in our battle against these demonic forces. The Spirit assures us: "The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

The Festival of All Saints reminds us that though Jesus has finished His work, we have not finished ours. He has struck the decisive blow, but we have the privilege of working in the mopping-up operation. Thus, century by century the Christian faith has rolled back the demonic realm of ignorance, fear, and superstition. Though things look bad in the Western world today, this work continues to make progress in Asia and Africa and Latin America.

The Biblical day begins in the preceding evening, and thus in the Church calendar, the eve of a day is the actual beginning of the festive day. Christmas Eve is most familiar to us, but there is also the Vigil of Holy Saturday that precedes Easter Morn. Similarly, All Saints' Eve precedes All Saints' Day.

The concept, as dramatized in Christian custom, is quite simple: On October 31, the demonic realm tries one last time to achieve victory, but is banished by the joy of the Kingdom.

What is the means by which the demonic realm is vanquished? In a word: mockery. Satan's great sin (and our great sin) is pride. Thus, to drive Satan from us we ridicule him. This is why the custom arose of portraying Satan in a ridiculous red suit with horns and a tail. Nobody thinks the devil really looks like this; the Bible teaches that he is the fallen Arch-Cherub. Rather, the idea is to ridicule him because he has lost the battle with Jesus and he no longer has power over us.

(The tradition of mocking Satan and defeating him through joy and laughter plays a large role in Ray Bradbury's classic novel, Something Wicked This Way Comes, which is a Halloween novel [which was made into a movie].)

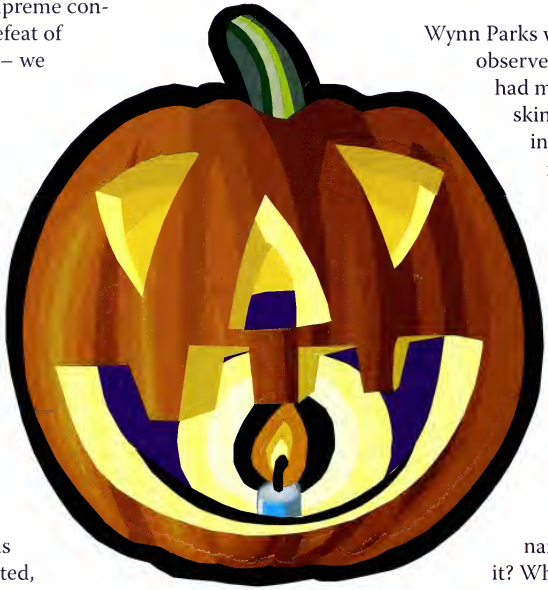
The gargoyles that were placed on the churches of old had the same meaning. They symbolized the Church ridiculing the enemy. They stick out their tongues and make faces at those who would assault the Church. Gargoyles are not demonic; they are believers ridiculing the defeated demonic army.

Thus, the defeat of evil and of demonic powers is associated with Halloween. For this reason, Martin Luther posted his 95 challenges to the wicked practices of the Church to the bulletin board on



the door of the Wittenberg chapel on Halloween. He picked his day with care, and ever since Halloween has also been Reformation Day.

Similarly, on All Hallows' Eve (Hallow-Even = Hallow-E'en = Halloween), the custom arose of mocking the demonic realm by dressing children in costumes. Because the power of Satan has been broken once and for all, our children can mock him by dressing up like ghosts, goblins, and witches. The fact that we can dress our children this way shows our supreme confidence in the utter defeat of Satan by Jesus Christ – we have NO FEAR!



I don't have the resources to check the historical origins of all Halloween customs, and doubtless they have varied from time to time and from Christian land to Christian land. "Trick or treat" doubtless originated simply enough: something fun for kids to do. Like anything else, this custom can be perverted, and there have been times when "tricking" involved really mean actions by teenagers and was banned from some localities.

We can hardly object, however, to children collecting candy from friends and neighbors. This might not mean much to us today, because we are so prosperous that we have candy whenever we want, but in earlier generations people were not so well off, and obtaining some candy or other treats was something special. There is no reason to pour cold water on an innocent custom like this.

Similarly, the jack-o'-lantern's origins are unknown. Hollowing out a gourd or some other vegetable, carving a face, and putting a lamp inside of it is something that no doubt has occurred quite independently to tens of thousands of ordinary people in hundreds of cultures worldwide over the centuries. Since people lit their homes with candles, decorating the candles and the candleholders was a routine part of life designed to make the home pretty or interesting. Potatoes, turnips, beets, and any number of other items were used.

Wynn Parks writes of an incident he observed: "An English friend had managed to remove the skin of a tangerine in two intact halves. After carving eyes and nose in one hemisphere and a mouth in the other, he poured cooking oil over the pith sticking up in the lower half and lit the ready made wick. With its upper half on, the tangerine skin formed a miniature jack-o'-lantern. But my friend seemed puzzled that I should call it by that name. `What would I call it? Why a "tangerine head," I suppose.'" (Parks, "The Head of the Dead," The World & I, November 1994, p. 270.)

In the New World, people soon learned that pumpkins were admirably suited for this purpose. The jack-o'-lantern is nothing but a decoration; and the left over pumpkin can be scraped again, roasted, and turned into pies and muffins.

In some cultures, what we call a jack-o'-lantern represented the face of a dead person, whose soul continued to have a presence in the fruit or vegetable used. But this has no particular relevance

to Halloween customs. Did your mother tell you, while she carved the pumpkin, that this represented the head of a dead person and with his soul trapped inside? Of course not. Symbols and decorations, like words, mean different things in different cultures, in different languages, and in different periods of history. The only relevant question is what does it mean now, and nowadays it is only a decoration.

And even if some earlier generations did associate the jack-o'-lantern with a soul in a head, so what? They did not take it seriously. It was just part of the joking mockery of heathendom by Christian people.

This is a good place to note that many articles in books, magazines, and encyclopedias are written by secular humanists or even the pop-pagans of the so-called "New Age" movement. (An example is the article by Wynn Parks cited above.) These people actively suppress the Christian associations of historic customs, and try to magnify the pagan associations. They do this to try and make paganism acceptable and to downplay Christianity. Thus, Halloween, Chrismas, Easter, etc., are said to have pagan origins. Not true.

Oddly, some fundamentalists have been infuenced by these slanted views of history. These fundamentalists do not accept the humanist and pagan rewriting of Western history, American history, and science, but sometimes they do accept the humanist and pagan rewriting of the origins of Halloween and Christmas, the Christmas tree, etc. We can hope that in time these brethren will re-examine these matters as well. We ought not to let the pagans do our thinking for us.

Nowadays, children often dress up as superheroes, and the original Christian meaning of Halloween has been absorbed into popular culture. Also, with the present fad of "designer paganism" in the so-called New Age movement, some Christians are uneasy with dressing their children as spooks. So be it. But we should not forget that originally Halloween was a Christian custom, and there is no solid reason why Christians cannot enjoy it as such even today.

"He who sits in the heavens laughs; Yahweh ridicules them" says Psalm 2. Let us join in His holy laughter, and mock the enemies of Christ on October 31.✝

James Jordan is a theologian, author, speaker, and director of Biblical Horizons, P. O. Box 1096, Niceville, Fla. 32588.

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Connecting the Dots With Our Future

By Homer Easley



I WANT TO SHARE SOME SEEMINGLY DISCONNECTED experiences that God has used to remind me of an important Biblical truth. You could say they are some "dots" on my map of recent experiences that God has connected. Let me start with a couple of passages of scripture that will set the framework for what I want to say.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:

"12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ... 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

We know that Jesus' resurrection and second coming is our hope and our central message to the world. In Matthew 28 we read:

"18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in 20 the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything

I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

Jesus clearly expects his followers to carry that message to the world. And in Matthew 24 Jesus again says:

"[44] So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. [45] Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? [46] It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns."

In this passage Jesus said that his return could come at any time.



The first "dot" that I want to begin to connect is a phone call that I received from Dr. David Arthur, volunteer curator of the Orrin Roe Jenks Adventual Collection at Aurora University. David said that he had identified some duplicate materials from the Jenks' collection and wanted to know if I would like to have them. I was pretty sure John Roller would like them, so I picked them up. I stacked them in the corner of our bedroom awaiting transport to the Triennial Convention to give them to John. One evening, out of curiosity, I opened one of the boxes and discovered a stack of Central AC Mission Bulletins from the 30s, 40s and 50s. I began reading through them and soon became overwhelmed by the number of references to churches in the Central Region that no longer exist. I began to ponder why. I was sure I could guess some of the reasons, but I was not sure I understood the basic reason. So "why?" I asked.



The second "dot" occurred a couple of weeks ago. I was listening to the Friday night ABC show 20/20 on which Elizabeth Vargas explored the validity of Christ's resurrection. In the middle of that broadcast one statement she made jumped out at me like I had never heard it before — when in fact I have heard it and even thought it myself many times as I read passages of scripture. The statement was "the apostles were convinced that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and it changed the way they lived their lives." As you read (or at least as I read) Scripture, I realize this fact became the motivation for both the apostles and disciples, and it even motivated them to risk — and give — their lives for it. But, I believe it wasn't JUST the fact that Christ had risen from the dead, but the belief that he was coming again SOON. Because of that, they had the responsibility — even the obligation — to take this message to the world, which made them willing to risk it all.





The third "dot" took place a couple of thousand years after Christ's resurrection: this Biblical truth was what motivated William Miller. Miller believed and preached that it wasn't just that Christ was going to return, but that he was going to return SOON. Miller, just before his death, said that knowing what he knew — even having experienced the great disappointment — he would still preach the same message without the specific date. Because, you see, he believed the return of Christ was imminent!



The next "dot" took place in January of this year. The Strategic Planning Committee



was meeting with the senior staff in Charlotte to begin to create a strategic plan for ACGC. One of the four planning areas identified by the group was "Communicating the Message" and the first point under that is "Establish again the priority of the message of the 'imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" Now in the past, my usual reaction to this statement has been to emphasize the phrase "return of our Lord Jesus Christ." But the "dots" described above have lead me to change that emphasis. "Imminent" is really the dominate word in that statement. It is not just that Christ is going to return but that his return is imminent! This point is emphasized by both Executive Director Ron Thomas and President Glenn Rice in the last issue of the *Witness*.

So now I think I began to get some real insight into why those churches I mentioned earlier closed. I think it was because they lost sight of the fact that Christ's return is imminent. Oh, I don't think they forgot about it or believed it wasn't true. But I think they began to ACT like there was not a real urgency to the message. To illustrate my point let me ask, "Do you live your life in such a way that demonstrates daily that you believe this truth?" I know that I rarely do. I believe that the fundamental reason those churches closed is because they forgot (or chose to ignore) this important truth. You see, it is easier to join in with the crowd. After all, don't all Christian churches teach that Christ is going to return?

But here is really the heart (and perhaps radical part) of my thinking: I believe God called William Miller, and ultimately created the Advent Christian Denomination, to teach about the IMMINENT return of Jesus Christ — not just that he was coming again. I think churches, just like people, have different functions in the Church (with a capital C.) I think the task given to the Advent Christian Church by God is to teach the world about the IMMINENT return of Jesus Christ. And unless we regain the fervor and urgency in our message, this denomination may well become irrelevant to God. For our first 100 years, we held true to our purpose, but over my lifetime, I think we have lost the urgency in our message.

When I first wrote down my thoughts on this topic, I thought "What a downer. Here I am talking about what we have not done instead of what we have accomplished." But the more I thought about it I realized what a tremendous responsibility and opportunity we have, if my proposition is true. If God really set us apart to deliver the message of the urgency of the return of Jesus Christ to the world, we should be excited. What hope we have to share with a troubled world that often does not see any future beyond this life!

But here is the hard part. How do we get back to the basics? Do we just preach the imminent return of Jesus Christ from our pulpits on a regular schedule? Maybe so. Do we hold special evangelistic meeting in which we proclaim that Biblical truth? Perhaps. Do we set up soap boxes on the major street corners of our communities and declare the truth to all within hearing range? Might be worth considering. Do we return to our heritage and print tracts and books. Should we try a more current idea and establish seeker small groups in our churches? Or ....

The question, it seems to me, is how do we reach the people that need the message the most and are not willing to come into the traditional church building or attend a traditional church event even if it's not in a church building.



One last seemingly unrelated "dot" in my life has helped me focus on a new way of thinking. About a year ago, Ron Thomas preached a sermon in the Aurora church titled "Doing Church Outside." In that sermon Ron challenged us to consider how we might take the message (the Church) to those outside the walls of the traditional church building. I have not been able to get that thought out of my mind since then.

So here is the bottom line. We must regain the passion (that seems to be the modern term for zeal, enthusiasm or commitment to a cause) in our own hearts and minds of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. And then take the message outside the church walls in a way and with an approach that will reach the unchurched and unchurch-able (I think this may be a new word). We have to be creative. We have to be risk-takers, willing to fail and then start over again. How do we do this you ask? I don't know. But I am convinced that if we do not regain the fervor of our forefathers, God may consider us irrelevant as a denomination — without purpose. The strategic plan we've adopted is a good one. And I support its four planning areas as critical to helping us move forward in the next three years. But, if we only accomplish one thing in this list of tasks, it MUST be to "Establish again the priority of the message of the 'IMMINENT return of our Lord Jesus Christ!'"

Let me conclude with this simple prayer: Lord, will you give us the courage, the will and the initiative to return to the message of the imminent return of your son? Give us the zeal of our forefathers. May we be willing to move out of our comfort zone and find ways that enable the lost of this country and this world to hear the message of the New Testament. Help us learn to do church outside. I ask this in the name of our soon returning Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.✞



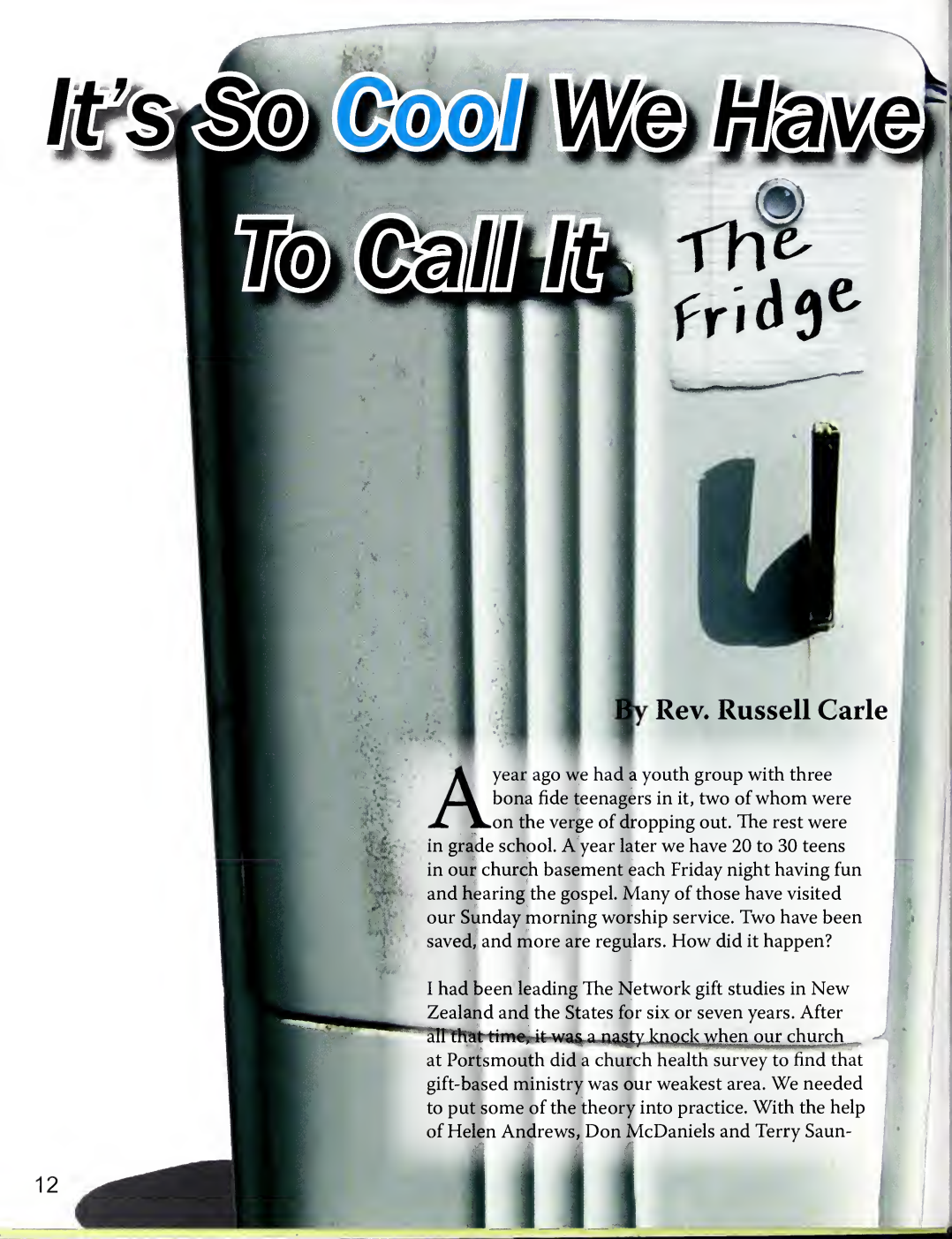


Mr. Homer Easley is President of the Central Region and also serves as: vice-president of the Executive Council, member of the ACGC Finance and Stretegic Planning Committees. He and his wife, Pauline, are members of the Aurora, Ill. AC Church.



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It's So Cool We Have To Call It The Fridge



By Rev. Russell Carle

A year ago we had a youth group with three bona fide teenagers in it, two of whom were on the verge of dropping out. The rest were in grade school. A year later we have 20 to 30 teens in our church basement each Friday night having fun and hearing the gospel. Many of those have visited our Sunday morning worship service. Two have been saved, and more are regulars. How did it happen?

I had been leading The Network gift studies in New Zealand and the States for six or seven years. After all that time, it was a nasty knock when our church at Portsmouth did a church health survey to find that gift-based ministry was our weakest area. We needed to put some of the theory into practice. With the help of Helen Andrews, Don McDaniels and Terry Saun-

ders, our Church Health Survey Implementation Committee, we began starting some new ministries based not on what our constitution said we ought to be doing for ministry but on what people actually were interested in doing.

At this time I asked myself the question, "Can I use one of my interests for the Lord, even if that interest is video games?" I know that most would think a pastor playing video games is scandalous. So I knew a ministry based on video games might be a long, hard sell. In March of 2004 I began to talk to the church leadership about a pilot program to test the idea. It involved spending about $500 for the equipment to try it out. We bought an X-Box video game system and enough controllers so that along with my son, Peter's X-Box we could play eight teens in a game. The game we picked is one of the most popular games in the world, called Halo. It is a "save the universe game" that is known as a first-person shooter. That means that your character shoots aliens who are trying to destroy humanity. In the multiplayer game you are in a valley or some other venue trying to shoot your friends. Think of it as paintball, only with space age weapons with your friends in a TV. Our pilot program was in April. It was an immediate hit with our kids.

I have had kids themselves ask how a church can use an "M" rated game.

So I went to the church and asked for permission to buy enough equipment for 12 kids to play in a game, and to do it as an outreach ministry on a Friday night. I talked with a lot of the church membership personally about this. Many had grave reservations, which I took — and still take — quite seriously: one was about selling snacks in our fellowship hall. I wanted the kids to be able to get a candy bar or piece of pizza but didn't want to have to budget big for feeding kids. Another was the game itself. Halo and its successor, Halo 2, have been rated among the ten most-violent games in the country on a national news program. I have had kids themselves ask how a church can use an "M" rated game. In answer to these concerns, the game is made up of three major components: one is its online version called "X-Box Live," which we don't use. The second is the campaign form that contains bad language, and zombie/horror sequences, a form which we do not play at our Friday night sessions. The third is the multiplayer part as I described above. This component, which I now have extensive experience with, is as bad as playing Cowboys and Indians as I did as a child, or laser tag, or paintball, which are currently more popular. (Cowboys and Indians would now be quite politically incorrect, but that was our play when I was young!)

The church voted to allow me to begin the ministry, so with the help of our one college student, Seth Burton, we opened in earnest in September. We had our fellowship hall set up with tables, a Ping-Pong table and three connected X-Box game systems. The rounds last 15 to 30 minutes. At the end of each I call out, "Ok everybody, over to the tables for a commercial for the Lord." At that point I share a two- to four-minute devotional.

Here's one of my favorites: "What is grace? Grace is undeserved love. The world loves you if ... if you are strong, if you are smart, if you are famous, if you are pretty, if you are rich, if you are good or if you are buying. The world loves you if. But we can't be strong, or smart or rich enough to impress God. What do we have that he needs? What talents are ours that he didn't give us? What power or good do we have that we don't sometimes misuse and abuse? But God, who we can't force to love us, has decided to love us. It isn't deserved. It comes from his choice and we can't change his mind. His love is undeserved, yet real. He showed it when he died



for us on the cross. If you want to talk to me about his love, I would be thrilled. Commercial over. Next round of play. Make sure those who didn't get a turn last time do this time."

In the course of the evening there are as many as six to nine commercials that, most of the time, the kids endure as they would a commercial on TV. Yet sometimes the Spirit hits a nerve, and they connect for a bit with the Word of God. We have had two young people make decisions for Christ as a result of this ministry, and have begun relationships with many, many more. More adults from the church, like Herb Burton, volunteered to help. One of our biggest helpers has been Carol Lombardi,

There have been lots of problems. In fact we knew there would be.

who has taken responsibility for the kitchen. Some purchased more and better equipment for our use, including an air-hockey table. Someone else gave a couple hundred dollars for me to buy a sign for the Fridge. My daughter, Emily, drew the graphic, which a sign printer made about 3 foot by 4 foot. As a result of the sign we have been featured in two of the local papers, The Portsmouth Herald, and Foster's Daily Democrat.

There have been lots of problems. In fact we knew there would be. When I asked the church board for permission to put a bunch of college men in our church apartment to help staff the Fridge, I was asked if I would assure the board that there wouldn't be any problems. I had to assure them that there would be lots of problems. They voted to allow it anyway. Thankfully, I gave the church the same basic promise before our kick-off in the fall. For Rally Day I preached from the end of Genesis where Joseph brings his boys, Manasseh and Ephraim to his father, Israel. Israel reaches out his hands and claims and blesses the boys as his own. Those boys had been raised in Egypt. They didn't dress or talk like any of Israel's other kids and grandkids. But he claimed them as his own. I



challenged the church to claim kids for Jesus from our area who didn't dress, act or talk like us. I told them when I was a youth I was often a handful. My friend and I were fooling around one Sunday when he pushed me into a pew. I pushed him into a stained-glass window and broke it. I said to the church, "I pray the Lord will give us a whole lot of rambunctious teenage boys to break the furniture around here! Amen?" I didn't get any "amens" at that point, but with a little pressing I got quite a few. We have the teens, and the broken furniture, and ironically even a broken window. Praise the Lord; the boy who pushed his brother into the window is one who went to the altar.

When the first Union ironclad, the Monitor, was built during the civil war, its inventor filed for many, many patents before it actually floated and moved off to engage the Confederate ship, the Merrimac. That is how it has been with the Fridge. We have had to find new solutions to new problems on an ongoing basis. For example, when we opened our snack shack in the basement there were kids who hadn't brought any money. So we treated them. A number of the kids repeatedly showed up without any money. To try and teach both hospitality and responsibility we made some "Fridge" money.

Now when someone new comes we give him or her a three-dollar bill so we can show hospitality. With that they can buy a couple pieces of pizza, a bag of chips and a soda. Then we tell them if they come next week they will have to bring their own money. Additionally, if they bring a guest, they get a three-dollar bill for each first-time guest they bring. Kids have brought bunches of kids. Some of our regulars continued to try and say that they had forgotten their money, but when we told them to

help themselves to the free fruit and carrot sticks, they suddenly remembered where their money was. Also when they come in and register, they get the back of their hand stamped with "Fridge." The usual response is "Cool!"

Many of the kids could care less about the video games. Some are there just to have a place to be with their friends. Some of the girls are there because the boys are there. It is one of the first youth ministries I have been in where we have more boys than girls. As with any teen ministry the boy/girl part bears careful watching. Our list of rules seems to grow with experience.

It has often been a stressful blessing. Kids have always been kids, but I haven't always been middle-aged. Many of the problems they have are as old as the hills, though to them they are brand new. Many of the families are broken and hurting. Some of the problems are weird and foreign to me. For example, it took a coordinated effort by the staff and parents to get a handle on what was going on with kids who were cutting* themselves.

Our church just had a potluck for the families who let their teens come to the Fridge. We sent invitations, followed by phone calls. Out of the 50 or so families we contacted, we got about a dozen parents to join us in our meal and go to the discussion group afterward. The parents were encouraging, creative and enthusiastic. Some signed up to help work at the Fridge. I thank the Lord, for it seems to me another giant step forward.

I am not the only one. The church is genuinely enthusiastic about the Fridge, the rambunctious kids and their sometimes-hurting families. For us personally, it's been a blessing to have a ministry that our youngest boy, Peter, loves to be a part of. Each time we have a new problem or challenge, I am tempted to sweep it under the rug to avoid losing church support for the effort. Instead I ask our people to pray. And they do — with a heart. They quite realistically expect we are going to have more problems. They have seen the Lord bless, and — in a new way — experienced the truth of the Word that says, "Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world." They expect the Lord to continue to use the Fridge to touch people for Christ. God grant it!✞



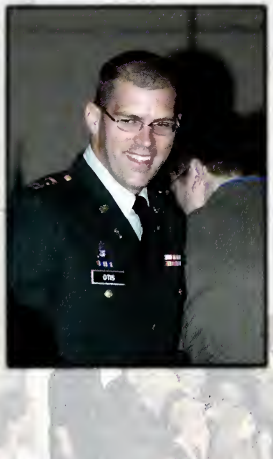
Cutting, one form of self-injury, is a serious problem for an estimated two to three million Americans. The urge to cut may be triggered by strong feelings the person can't express—such as anger, hurt, shame, frustration, depression, a lack of "feeling alive" or sense of control—and they haven't developed healthy ways of coping. If you, or anyone you know, is self-injuring, please talk with someone you trust.

Rev. Russell Carle is pastor of Portsmouth Advent Christian Church in New Hampshire. He also serves as Advent Christian General Conference area director for Africa/Europe.





2005 Triennial Convention



More than 400 Advent Christians gathered at Fo[u]r's In[n] in Virginia Beach, Va., to participate in the 2005 [T]rienni[al] Convention. In addition to the North Americans [w]atten[d] many visitors came from overseas, including repr[e]sentativ[es] from Japan, India, South Africa, Malawi, Croati[a], Phi[l]ippines and New Zealand. David Burge, representi[ng] the Ne[w] Zealand Advent Christian Conference, gave the f[o]llowing [a]count of the convention in his report to the church in New Zealand.

Garry Schache and I were privileged to attend the [T]renni[al] Christian General Conference of America on beh[a]lf of the [A]sociation, ACCONZ and ACMissioNZ. This was [a] third [T]rienni[al] first. The Conference was held at the Founders In[n] in Virgini[a] first stop (other than airports) was in Maine to st[a]y a few d[ays]









Pictured, clockwise from upper left: Russell Carle and Nathan Fernando; the Parade of Flags; Dave Crimi, Austin Warriner and David Dean; Leigh Ross; the Triennial nursery; national workers and AC missionaries; Dr. John Roller with Venture Bookstore; and Chaplain Carl Otis.



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o sta few days with the Carle family.

(Continued on page 19)





Russell now pastors the Portsmouth Advent Christian Church. Garry (worship leading) and I (preaching) took the service there Sunday morning, June 19. It was a blessing to us both. Tim (Russell's son-in-law) was moved by the service (and others also). We were encouraged to hear him say so. In the evening we did a presentation on our NZ work. Folk from surrounding AC Churches attended this evening, and we made a number of new friends.

After a few days with the Carle's we began our journey of around 600 miles to Virginia. Russell, Garry and I, with our luggage, crammed into a VW Beetle. Staying overnight with Russell's brother Barry and his wife Joannie in Connecticut, we set out early for New York. We experienced Central Park, the Empire State Building and "Ground Zero" as well as a New York traffic jam.

Our second overnight stay was in a New Jersey motel. We met up with Michael Day, an Advent Christian with no AC Church nearby. He felt called to begin one so now a church meets in his home. What an encouragement to talk and pray over our church planting efforts! Pray God will prosper Michael's efforts also.

The Advent Christian General Conference began for us on the evening of Thursday, June 23, with the Women's Home & Foreign Mission Society banquet to which, along with Grant Aldridge (AC-MissioNZ missionary to the Philippines) and other international delegates, Garry and I were invited. On Friday we had the opportunity to attend a seminar entitled "Growing a Healthy Church." Another inspiring seminar was on "Natural Church Development." Meeting with AC conference leaders from India, Philippines, Kenya, Malawi, and Africa, with missionaries Earl & Martha Wright, and Jeff & Penny Vann, as well as hundreds of leaders from AC churches and ministries from all over the USA, was inspiring in itself.

A day-and-a-half Mentoring Session followed the Conference for overseas guests. During this session we heard teaching on a number of topics important to the AC work around the world. The day before we left, Michael and Pam Gardner (Pastor of Hilltop Advent Christian Church, Missouri) took us on a tour of America's largest Naval base nearby. Michael is an Army Chaplain (LTC), but he didn't have to pull rank to get us on the tour. On July 3 we began our journey home. It took until July 5 to make it back to NZ!

Prayer & God's Presence

One of the speakers at the Conference was Dr. Terry Teykl, formerly a United Methodist pastor, now a member of America's National Prayer Committee and founder of Texas-based Renewal Ministries. He spoke about The Presence-Based Church. That is, a Church that seeks to know the presence of God rather than please people. Both Garry and I came away with a renewed hunger to know God as expressed through worship and prayer.

Moses said the Presence of God with Israel was what distinguished them from all the other peoples of the earth (Exodus 33:15-16). The sense of the Presence of God among them as the early church gathered caused the inquiring unbeliever to fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (1Cor. 14:24-25). O that people looking for spiritual reality will be drawn, not by our programs or personalities, but by a sense of the Presence of God among us!✞



Garry Schache and David Burge

David Burge is husband to Tarnya, and father to Sam, Rachel, Noah, Jonathan, Joseph, Thomas and soon-to-be-born Baby Burge. He is President of both the Advent Christian Conference of New Zealand and the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand. He is a pastor among the Advent Christian Churches in New Zealand. In his spare time he plays a mean game of chess.

Twisted Scriptures

Pastor David Burge



Is Death Better By Far?

Does Paul's desire "to depart and to be with Christ" show us that the believer goes immediately to "heaven" at death and thus that death is "better by far" than life? No way!

Once again we must ask, on the subject of the afterlife, why was it that the only comfort Paul offered the Thessalonian Church was that the dead in Christ would be resurrected when Jesus comes again? (l Thess. 4:13-18). Likewise, in l Corinthians 15, if Paul believed that the departed go straight to heavenly bliss, why does he put forward no hope other than that of the resurrection?

Looking at Philippians 1:20-24 in context, we note the following:

1. It is in Paul's body (not his "soul") that he hopes Christ will be exalted, whether by life or death (20);
2. The "gain" Paul has in mind is first and foremost that to the cause of Christ through his dying a martyr's death (20), then that which is to Paul personally from his martyrdom (21). He no doubt aspired to be like the many "others," the unnamed heroes of the faith, who are mentioned in Hebrews 11, who "were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection." (See Heb. 11:35);
3. So elsewhere Paul speaks of his desire to share in Christ's sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so at length to attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:10-11);
4. In 2 Tim. 4:6-8 Paul speaks of his imminent death as a "departure": beyond death however it is the "Day" of Christ's return that he — along with everyone else — looks to;
5. Throughout the book of Philippians it is clearly the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return upon which Paul fastens his hope: It is only then that "our lowly bodies will be like his glorious body" (3:20-21).

Paul speaks not of his "soul" departing but of his whole self. His use of the term, "depart," suggests a journey in which the beginning is death and the end is being with Christ. It is this end which is "better by far." Paul will be with Christ after death, but Philippians 1:23 tells us nothing as to *how* or *when* he will be with Christ. Elsewhere Paul makes it clear: It is by resurrection. Meanwhile, either by the way he lives his life, or by the way he dies a martyr's death, Paul aims to exalt Christ.

This should be our aim too!✞

Pastor David Burge is President of both the Advent Christian Conference of New Zealand and the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand, and pastor among the Advent Christian Churches in New Zealand.

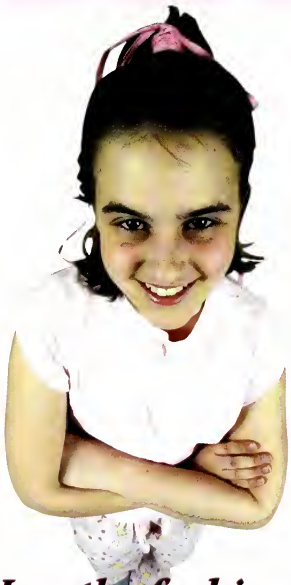
...things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).



Too Tight

Too Short





Too Young

How the fashion industry is targeting 'tweens' — and what you can do about it

As my friend and I shared coffee in her kitchen, she lamented over the girl her young son was dating. "She's wearing a belly ring!"

I tried to reassure her. "Sometimes girls don't realize what they're doing."

"She knows what she's doing," my friend said, "I asked her what the motivation was in having a belly ring, and she said, 'It makes me feel more sexy!'"

Perhaps your daughter doesn't have a belly ring, but she's been showing her belly off as today's trend dictates. Or maybe she doesn't show much skin — just a lot of shape. Even such seemingly innocent styles as sweatpants have their pitfalls, as one exasperated pastor's wife and mother of a preteen learned: "I told her we shouldn't have bought those sweatpants that have words on the posterior, but I caved.

"I just never know where to draw the line. What's 'just fashion' and what's displeasing to God? How do you know what's a passing fad and what battles are worth fighting?"

SEDUCTIVE IMAGES

Battles between parents and kids over clothing styles are not new. What is new is that the fashion industry and the media that support it are promoting their wares to a much younger, and more vulnerable, consumer than in years past.

Should we be worried? As the mom quoted above found out, it isn't always easy to distinguish between a harmless fad and something more dangerous. But a strong case can be made that the end result of today's immodest fashion is a greater likelihood of sexual sin. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health (MISH) has listed five factors that place a girl at the highest risk of sexual activity at an early age. A girl who "looks older than she actually is" is one of the factors listed. These girls are made to look older by fashion and makeup, most of which hint at or blatantly advertise her sexuality.

Most parents want to avoid anything that places their daughter at risk of having her heart broken by sexual pain. But while it's a battle worth fighting, it's a battle that won't be easily won. Today's teens and preteens are exposed daily to messages and images that make them believe the lie that seductive, sensual exposure is merely "fashion" — fashion they can find easily, at places like Sears and Target.

And the mainstream media are taking notice. For example, evaluating the new styles for summer 2002, an editorial in the *Washington Post* noted that "you can find terry-cloth bikinis at GapKids, and metallic-looking bras and bikini underpants labeled 'Girl Identity' in the girls' department of Sears ..."

CNN and Fox News Channel commentator Betsy Hart used the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* as her soapbox to attack Target, where she found everything for her young daughter too tight and low and short. She said that "dressing (her) not-yet-six-year-old like she was Britney Spears is at best silly, and at worst unnecessarily sexualizing our littlest girls."

Abercrombie and Fitch took the biggest hit for selling thongs with the words "Eye Candy" printed on them in their children's store for 7- to 14-year-olds. Abercrombie spokesman Hampton Carney attempted to minimize the issue by saying that the thongs were only sold in sizes medium to extra-large and so targeted girls aged 10 and up.

While the editorials raged on, *Cosmo Girl* showcased a hot-looking blonde on the cover of their May 2002 issue in a teeny, tiny white T-shirt with a bold message in hot-pink letters: "be SEXY ... it doesn't mean you have to have sex." This shirt is the community effort of Candies, a popular teen shoe and clothing line, to promote abstinence (Can you say *oxymoron?*)

The good news is that most girls simply follow today's fashion standards with much naiveté. With some solid reasoning, they're often teachable. So, how can parents approach their daughters, and with what information?

1. START EARLIER THAN YOU WOULD EXPECT

Research tells us that the most formative years for a young woman's sexual values are between the ages of — hold on to your seats — 8 and 10. When age-appropriate guidelines and truths in the

areas of sexuality, purity, and modesty are established during these years, they tend to stick. Talk to your daughter about modesty now rather than after she's fully developed — she is more likely to embrace your views. Talking to her before she develops also allows you to avoid making her feel like her new curves are "bad." The issue is *not* her body. God made it, and it is beautiful. The issue is how she presents her body — the clothes.

My daughter is nine years old. Nearly two years ago we began to talk about modesty, and we removed some of the clothes she wore as a little girl from her wardrobe. No more spaghetti-strapped tank tops. While they aren't sexual on her now, it's just a few years until these will be inappropriate for her. I knew she was embracing these concepts when we were in public not long ago and she grabbed me and whispered, "Mom, I think you need to button another button. That shirt isn't very modest!" I pray this intimacy we share continues as we approach the tween years.

2. CELEBRATE HER BEAUTY

It's important to give your daughter confidence in the beauty of her body. Proverbs 5:18, 19, ESV says, "Rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be *intoxicated* always by her love" (italics added). The God of the universe looks down at woman and encourages *one man* to be fully intoxicated by her sexuality.

As our daughters begin to develop curves, they often feel self-conscious and struggle with issues of self-esteem. Fathers can feel awkward around their growing girls, which contributes to the problem: Many middle-school and junior high-ages girls report feeling as if their dad had suddenly stopped loving them, noting the significant difference in his hugs and other tactile expressions. Yet one of the significant risk factors contributing to early sexual activity is a girl's feeling of not being connected to her dad. Conversely, feelings of connection powerfully reduce the risk.

So to all the dads out there: Don't stop hugging your daughter! She needs your love now more than ever. Keep hugging her!

And Mom, talk about those beautiful changes in your daughter's body. To say nothing is as bad as speaking negatively about her body. Talk freely about the changes in her body and even consider celebrating them. You could take her to a day spa and treat her (and yourself) to a "women's" day of pampering. Or create your own home spa complete with bubble bath, sparkling grape juice, music, and a scented candle. You could even invite key women in her life — grandma, aunts, Sunday-school teacher — over for a lemonade "toast" to her womanhood. Each can tell a story about embracing womanhood or perhaps present a small, inexpensive gift that is an object lesson about embracing womanhood.

Any of these celebrations can be an opportunity to openly discuss the beauty of the female body and to present some precious Scripture to show her how very much God celebrates her beauty. Try Psalm 45, a wedding Psalm, or Psalm 139:13-16.

3. CALL IMMODESTY WHAT IT IS.

Once you've built a foundation for her body as a beautiful masterpiece from God, it's time to address the issue of immodesty head-on. This is probably best done when she's fully developed and is at least 11 to 13 years old and spiritually and emotionally capable of processing deeper spiritual concepts.

According to the Hebrew and Greek definitions, sin is missing God's intended purpose — or "the mark" — for our lives. Look back at that verse from Proverbs. "Rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be *intoxicated* always by her love." A woman or young girl is absolutely worthy of the stares that may come her way, but God says that the unique characteristics of her sensual beauty are to be treasured secrets — secrets to keep for *one man.* When a girl dresses immodestly, she creates arousal in *many* men. That is missing the purpose of God's carefully crafted masterpiece. Is it just fashion? No. Immodesty is *sin.* And we must call it that when we talk to our daughters.



4. OFFER POSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Don't get caught up in all the "no-no's" of fashion. I think we do great harm to the body of Christ when we create legalistic standards concerning beauty and fashion. The Bible does not condemn beauty and fashion. On the contrary, beauty seems to be a significant part of God's glory. In the book of Revelation, God is described in undeniable splendor. Things we consider beautiful seem to adorn Him in John's vision of heaven. Beauty is one of God's greatest expressions. I think it's only fitting that we, created in His image, strive to express ourselves through beauty as well.

And though God implores us to be more concerned with our inner beauty than our external beauty, the Bible provides many examples of appreciation for external beauty. Sarah was so beautiful that ol' Abraham was afraid other men might kill him so they could have his wife. Rebekah was "very beautiful" and a "virgin." Abigail was "intelligent and beautiful." Esther is perhaps the woman in Scripture most acclaimed for her beauty. There are more. The fact that their beauty is even mentioned in a document that doesn't waste words is significant.

Did these beauties of the Bible appear plain and without the use of the fashion of the day? Not necessarily. Several times the Bible notes that beautiful women used cosmetics to make themselves more beautiful. (Isaac even gave Rebekah a nose ring as an engagement ring. In those days it was a sign of royalty.) While we can't fixate on external beauty, I believe God's Word gives us room to express ourselves creatively and beautifully.

5. PROVIDE PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

Give your daughter some fun and practical ideas for dressing so she can see what the standard needs to be. Remember, in our oversexed culture it's quite possible that she hasn't actually *seen* fashion that's both fun and modest. She also needs to go through the process of testing her own choices so that she can internalize the decision to live a lifestyle of modesty.

Here are some practical "tests" you can suggest she use to enable her to determine if an outfit is OK:

- To test if a shirt is long enough and her pants aren't too low, use the "Raise and Praise" test. She should stand in front of a mirror fully dressed and raise her hands in the air as if in praise to the Lord. This will show her how she will appear to those around her as she raises her hands. If you see skin, consider modifying the outfit. Be creative. For my fashion show I do for teens, I hit the guys' department and bought some simple $4 clearance ribbed T-shirts. Guys' shirts are long enough to tuck deeply into low-riders as an undershirt. The girls get the illusion they want without compromise.

- To test the length of a pair of shorts or a skirt, she can sit cross-legged on the floor or sit in a chair with her legs crossed in front of a mirror. She'll get an idea of what others might see when they sit across from her. Many girls will quickly modify their outfits.

- Develop a test with her to determine if her shirt is too tight. If she shows off the full form of her chest, it's too tight. Be creative. What test can she come up with to internalize a better standard in this area?

When we hit the mark — God's intended purpose for us — He blesses us. In fact, when you get to the Greek New Testament, the word for sin is *hamartia,* which means "to miss the mark and so not share in the prize." Here, the word for sin actually speaks of the reward, the blessing, the benefit of living according to God's specific purpose for our lives. He loves to bless you and your daughter. Aim for the prize!

The bottom line is that modesty is a positive choice, and when it's presented early and with a positive focus, it's embraced much more easily. Immodesty, on the other hand, is sin. Narrow-minded? The path to pleasing God is narrow, but oh, the rewards are so incredibly unfathomable!✝

Dannah Gresh is the author of Secret Keepers: The Delicate Power of Modesty *(Moody Publishers). Her first book,* And the Bride Wore White, *is the basis for a retreat that's been used in over 2,000 churches in multiple countries.*





Advent Christian
General Conference
President
Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Pools, Purpose and Process!

Lately I've been thinking a lot about the subjects of leadership, discipleship and maturity in Christ. Subjects like these interest most Christians and, I think in our case, most *Advent Christians*. Over the years, I've discovered that there are many opinions concerning these topics. There have been a variety of books written on these issues and not all of them agree.

I am not surprised that they don't all agree. However, I do want to consider the fact that there are similarities in their approaches that are worth further examination. In particular, each approach knows what it's looking for (a clearly defined goal) and has a strategic way (plan) for reaching that goal. These two factors alone are foundational when it comes to achieving leadership development, discipleship and maturity.

It's been my experience that few have a clear understanding of this part of the church's work. Too many are satisfied to simply say that we are here to "make disciples" or some other kind of coined phrase, but far too little effort or thinking has gone into exactly how this will be done. Perhaps an example will serve to illustrate my point.

Seventeen years ago my wife and I moved to Jacksonville, Fla., to begin our ministry at the West Jax AC Church. We rented a house for four years but eventually built our own, where we now live. A few years later, we had a pool built in our backyard (a life-long dream). Earlier this year we had to replace the vinyl liner, the pump and a few other things. Despite the heat we have been experiencing all this summer, only now do we have a functional pool and it is a real blessing.

Once the pool was repaired, Andy, the pool man, asked me to stop by the office so he could spend time with me discussing the care of the pool. I set up the appointment and went. What took place will forever stick in my mind. Andy, who has now become my friend, met with me for almost two hours and walked me through the caring process of my pool. I will never forget what Andy said: "In the beginning, a pool is like a child. You can't just let it run and play. You must watch over it and take care of it." Andy slowly and carefully read through the brochures, underlining and highlighting important stuff, and making notes in the margins so I would understand. And guess what — I understand more now than ever how to take care of my pool. The funny thing is this, I think I could tell someone else how to do it because someone took the time to tell and show me.

(Continued top of next page)

I left the pool store and the Lord began to speak to me about my experience. As I thought about what had happened in the pool store I began to ask, "How much effort do we make in helping people understand what it's going to take to become a disciple of Christ, whatever the level of commitment and ministry?" It disturbed me to think that I had just received more instruction on how to take care of my pool than the amount of help that the believer receives from the church on how to follow Christ. I immediately realized that this is one of the big reasons people and churches do not grow and mature as the Lord desires. We have, in many cases, left them alone and told them by our lack of action in this area, "You're on your own." Speaking from experience, when you leave your pool alone and don't take care of it — if only for a few days — the results can be nasty. Imagine what can happen to a person who wants to follow Christ but receives little or no help in that process.

If my pool man can take this much time to share with me how to take care of my pool, how much more should pastors and churches be committed to showing our people (especially new Christians) how to become mature in the areas of leadership development and disciple-making. The Bible is clear on the goal and the process. Perhaps it's time we follow Andy's example and use the pens and highlighters. There's no telling what could happen!✞

(Editorial continued)

This lesson from the boatbuilder continues to guide me like a lighthouse blazing against the rocky shoals. Those shoals, for me, are unreasonable pursuits of excellence. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for pursuing excellence... if you've got the time and resources. But usually I have neither. Either I settle for less-than-perfection, or I won't get the job done at all.

For instance, consider the magazine you're holding in your hand right now. There are few things I'd rather do than publish an award-winning issue. But this probably isn't it. And I doubt the next issue will win any awards either. I know there are flaws that need to be fixed. There are articles that could use more editing, the graphics are too simple or don't perfectly illustrate the authors' points. There's so much more that could be done. If I had the time, I might even be able to write a decent editorial! But, because publishing this magazine is worth doing, it's worth doing poorly ... well, maybe not poorly, but less-than-perfectly.

Think about how today's "pursuit of excellence" hinders people from doing things worth doing. How many people with pure hearts and grateful spirits will never sing praise to the Lord because they don't have "excellent" voices? After five seasons of American Idol, it's a wonder anyone is willing to stand up in front of a church and sing ... you can almost hear people in the back pew thinking, "It sounds a little pitchy to me."

Ironically (but thankfully) the most important jobs don't require "excellent" skills to start. My Mom and Dad had no parenting skills when my older brother was born (Those didn't come until I was in the picture!). I imagine they did some pretty poor parenting early on; but, since parenting was worth doing, they kept at it and eventually their skills improved. I'll bet it was the same with your parents.

The truth "anything worth doing is worth doing poorly ... until you can do it well" is both liberating and burdensome. We're not losing sleep because this magazine isn't perfect — it's worth doing and so we're doing it poorly ... at least until we can do it well. Accepting that is a tremendous blessing.

On the other hand, since it is worth doing, we have to do it — even if it isn't as good as we wish it were. We have deadlines that tell us we're done — whether we're happy with the final product or not. And we can't just give up and excuse ourselves by saying, "Since we can't do it with excellence, we're not going to bother to do it at all."

I wonder how many people use this very argument to justify laziness. "Since I've got no experience teaching, I'd probably be no good at it, and, if I can't teach fifth grade Sunday School with excellence, I'm not teaching at all!" Or, "I could help my neighbor paint, but I'm not very good at it and I wouldn't want to embarrass the Lord by doing a poor job." Or, "I ought to share my testimony with my co-workers but I've never done that before and I'd probably fall flat on my face. I'd better wait until I'm better prepared."

I've built several boats. I could show you flaws in every one of them. But my skills improved, and even the first one floats. But I wouldn't have started that first boat if I hadn't heard the wisdom that said, "Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly... until you can do it well."✞

Decode the message by replacing the numbers with their corresponding letters. Not all letters will be used. One letter has been done for you.

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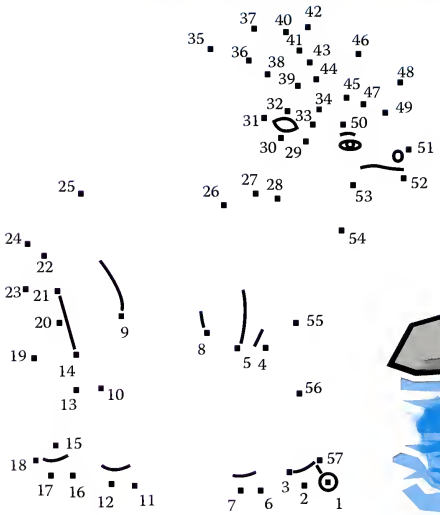
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Luke 10:2

Connect the dots; then unscramble the Bible verse.



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Psalm 42:1





As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

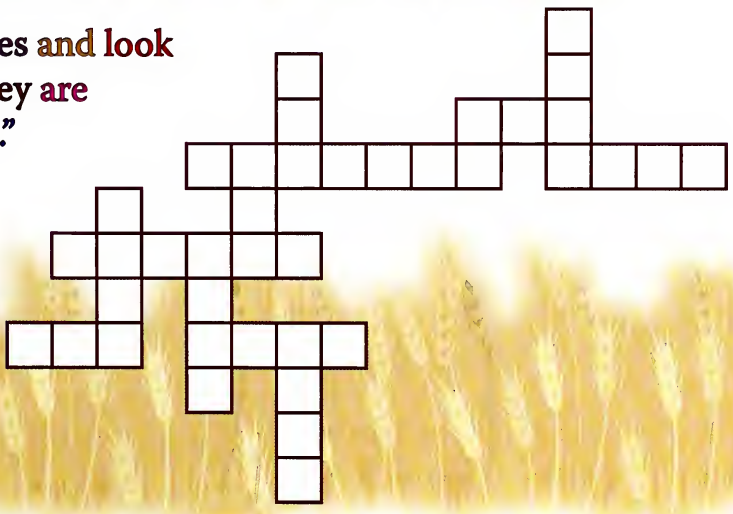
by Dawn Russell

Can you find the two Fall scenes that match?



Fit the words from the Bible verse into the puzzle.

"...open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."



Thoughts and Reflections from South Africa



By Leah Van Eaton

"My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit — not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength — that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. God can do anything, you know — far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us"

— Ephesians 3:14-21, The Message.

As a college student going into my third year of undergraduate studies, I sometimes feel sucked into the world of academia. Studying sociology and writing/rhetoric, there is broad thinking, research, many papers, and seemingly endless discussion. It's all part of the life and the classroom. At times I love it, and at times I hate it. In the midst of all this, God has given me a passion and call to mission. I find myself asking what this looks like — what does mission look like? In what capacity has God gifted me to serve him? And interestingly enough, God provided the opportunity to serve him on the mission field this summer.

The Summer of Service (SOS) program is a summer mission program through the school I attend, Northwestern College. This year 26 students volunteered to spend their summer serving the Lord all around the world in a ministry setting. We spent time together studying cultures, mission, and the Word before finally heading out in different directions for the summer. I felt led to serve in Durban, South Africa, working with a young mothers program through the Youth For Christ (YFC) ministry. It's aim is teaching life skills — such as cooking and sewing — and also fostering hope and a future in young mothers. I spent ten weeks working alongside this ministry in South Africa. In that time I saw and experienced many, many things.

It is difficult now for me to put it into words and try to

explain what I have learned. Yet as I read back through the journals I kept this summer, I see a similar theme repeating itself over and over again — God is working. God is in South Africa. God is working there. God is in the U.S. God is working here. God is "far more than I [you] could ever imagine or guess or request in my [your] wildest dreams." The only way I know how to show this is to share some of the stories, feelings, and thoughts that I recorded throughout the summer.

May 3
The last meeting of my fellow students in the Summer of Service Program

"Our last meeting. Crazy that the time has gone so fast. I'm really going to miss the team. So many little details — what to give the site, what to leave with my family, what to pack, what not to pack, immigration, customs, and so on ... and so on ...

Lord, help me to remember and be quick in thought when needed. Humbleness, love, and consideration in the example of Jesus — for these attributes I ask. I pray for the ministry, the team, the mothers I will be working with, the children and the country of South Africa. I do not feel spiritually prepared and it scares me a little — or a lot — if I really think about it. Help. I love you Lord. Amen."

May 28
My first weekend in South Africa, at a retreat with the young mothers' program

"...We picked up the mothers and their children at the community. They were all so excited to go — all looking nice, too. Truly beautiful young women. And the township they live in. Wow. The "poorest" place I have ever seen. I had initial shock, I think. Houses crammed together — actually shacks — on extremely steep and narrow roads where even the skilled taxi driver killed the engine a couple times.

The mothers introduced themselves, but spoke little English. I was the only English-speaking person in the van I rode in. I felt like an outcast. I had no idea what they were saying and wondered if it was about me — dumb, but I did! They didn't really try to include me either, and I felt very intimidated ... My role at the retreat is to help take care of the babies while the mothers have group sessions. Such sweet beautiful, beautiful babies. Sometimes lots of crying, but not always or even most of the time. Mmm ... wish I could write and remember their names ... I pray to be useful however I can and to have peace and unselfishness in the face of not understanding."

June 6
Adjusting to the culture and place

"At this moment I would like to be home. I am frustrated with myself. I feel sort of stupid and a little helpless. Like I never realized all the things I can't do — before I came here ... shall I name a few? I can't cook. I can't speak another language. I don't have a credit card. I can't play an instrument. I can't drive a stick-shift vehicle. And the list goes on. I just feel very inadequate. I know this is a good opportunity and I feel guilty for not really enjoying it at the moment — yet I know this is realistic ... right? A seemingly small thing like cooking — yet it's really frustrating me to depend on others for help. I pray for patience. I want to pray for self-sufficiency, but I know that you know better than I."

June 13
One of my first days in the young mothers' program

"Frustrated. In South Africa. Sitting in a township.
Doing Nothing.
Isn't there something
that can be done?
A way I can help?
A way I can serve?

Yet Beauty. Voices.
Young. Echoing through
the solid cement walls.
A harmony.
Green and white school
uniforms.
Checkered colors. Skirts
right above the knees.

'We're dying like
chickens.' Eyes serious.
Not laughing.
'One day, Manile will
be gone and you'll
say — "Oh, there was
nothing wrong with her"
— and I'll be gone.'"



Vuyo, who is in the young mothers' program, and her daughter, Amathle

June 19
Volunteering at a Children's Home in Durban, where I volunteered for a couple afternoons when I wasn't working with the young mothers' program

"Little boy — Combuso. 7 years. Looks like 4. Peeling skin on his hands. Sores. Fever. Skinny, skinny. Feel the bones sitting on my lap. Feel the fever against my lips. Tracing his hands around mine. Singing. Singing. Singing.

Jesus loves Combuso — this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves Combuso.
Yes, Jesus loves Combuso.
Yes, Jesus loves Combuso, for the Bible tells me so.

And again. Rocking him on my lap — singing the words. Praying the words — pleading them to him, to God, to me —

Jesus loves you this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves you.
Yes, Jesus loves you.
Yes, Jesus loves you, the Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves you, Combuso. I don't know why you are dying. I don't understand why the skin on your hands is peeling and your fever makes you sweat and thirst. I don't understand why you are weak. I don't understand why you got this disease. But I do know you are loved by God. May you also know this. Amen."

June 20
A day in the young mother's program where the mothers took initiative to make and sell "fat cakes" in their community as a project

"In the community, we got there and the mothers had made fat cakes and were already selling them. It was like a celebration. It was so cool to walk in and see the joyful expressions on everyone's faces. Thank you, Lord. I pray the mothers would know that they can do it.

One of the mothers, Nana, was there with her son, Siya. Ah. Beautiful boy. And smart too! He's in this stage where he mimics everything you say and do. So cute. I would dance, he would dance. I would say "baby" or "Leah" and he would too! Sometimes I think I can't wait to go home. Other times I can't imagine leaving. Lord, may I live each day fully in this place.

July 7
Thinking about the future of the young mothers' program and how it fits into the lives of the mothers.

"A sustainable program. What does that look like? This is not about me. I will be leaving soon. Going back to a college education and a job market. The mothers will be here. In the same situation. With the same goals? With the same means and mindset to reach those goals? Knowing you more? How?



A day in the young mother's program

We can teach to cook — but where do the ingredients come from once "we" are gone? We can teach to sew, but where will the machine or material or thread or needle come from when we can't provide? And art supplies or jobs? I just don't know. And it does seem hopeless. And how do I fit into this? I really don't know. At all. Only you know, Lord ... and I will keep trusting in you. One step at a time. And for now, it is not about me — it is about the mothers and their children who I am serving. May I remember this.

God. Jesus. Father. Holy Spirit. All that you are. I call out to you. For Nonchlanchla and Siya and Nana and Vuyo and Amathle and Thando and Ayanda ... I ask for mercy. I ask that they would know you. That they would have food, clothing, shelter. Love. And I'm going to go home. And I'm going to forget. That's my fear. Let me not forget this place, these people. I don't know what exactly it means to remember ... praying, loving in Spirit ... but I do not want to forget. May I be a part of your presence here and see your presence in those I am serving. I love you, Lord. Amen."



Leah holding baby Siya



Amanda, one of the girls staying in the Children's Home

Pictured below: Leah with the kids at the Children's Home



July 24
The last time I volunteered at the Children's Home. We had a little party with music and food.

"Dancing
Arms pumping at the side
Little legs stepping and stomping with the beat
Arms pumping at the side — in beat with the stepping and stomping.
Small, young boy — bottom sticking out as the arms pump and the legs stomp.
Impish smile.
Don't watch! But watch!
Look at me.
Watch me live.
See my rhythm."

July 27
The last day I worked with the Young Mothers' Program

"So many different emotions today. The program went well. Mothers came. They were late in coming, but they did show up. And we baked a cake and made pancakes. It was nice. It was strange, though, to have it be my last day with them. I was sad to see them go. I may never see them again. Strange feeling. But you have them."

July 31
In the Airport, on the way home to Iowa.

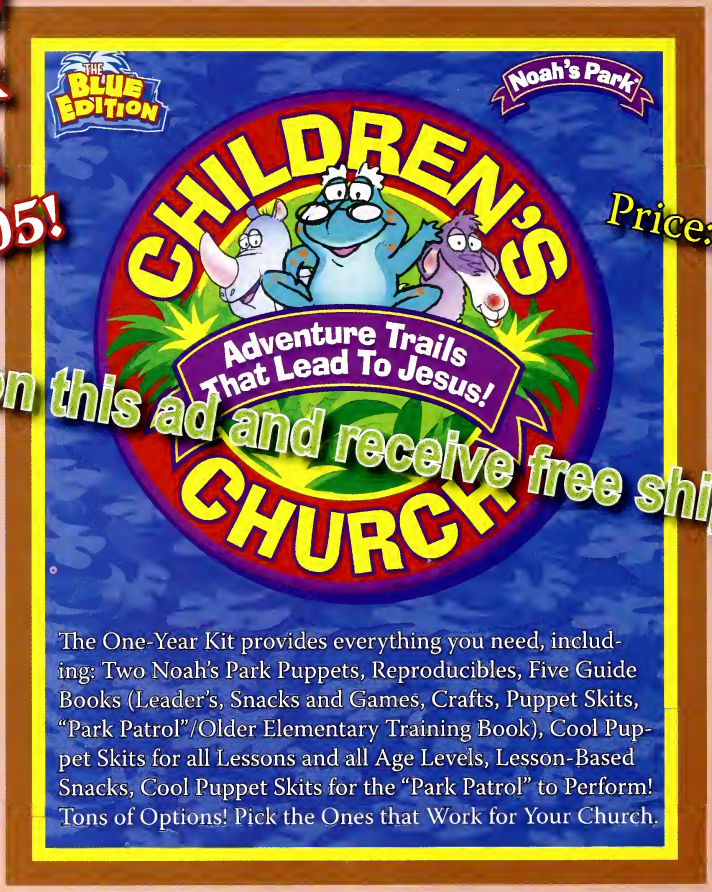
"Wow. I'm here. I'm leaving the place I've called home for the past two and a half months. Can't believe it. Surreal. Thank you, God, for those people I just said goodbye to. I love them. I am yours, God. I ask for protection and perseverance as I travel. I love you, Lord. Amen.

God. Thank you. You are in South Africa. You speak Zulu. You have braided hair. You dance and play in the dust and go barefoot and eat pickled spices. And love those kids in the children's home. And you love the mothers: Vuyo, Nonto, Hlengi, Kinny, Pretty, Mathembie, Zinhle, Duma and Nana ... You travel winding footpaths and ride in taxis. Thank you for your world and for letting me experience more of it. Amen."

I pray that you would be encouraged, as I have been, by the work that God is doing throughout the world. He is truly a glorious and powerful God whose reach extends far beyond anything imaginable. After having experienced God's power and people in South Africa, I am encouraged in hope, and I pray that you may be also.✞

Leah Van Eaton is a rising junior at Northwestern College in Iowa, majoring in English and Sociology. She is a member of the Villisca Advent Christian Church. For the past three summers she has been involved in ministry, serving twice in our Appalachian Regional Summer Ministries program and now spending a summer in South Africa.

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From the Editor



Obvious drama rarely accompanies important events. Each day thousands of people learn they have cancer — some are told it's terminal — and they leave their doctor's office to deal with that news ... and paying bills, and what to eat for dinner. No musical soundtrack suddenly rings out, signaling their heroic struggle. No audience of thousands buys tickets to admire and sympathize with their plight. Instead, life-changing news comes served with a big helping of the mundane. Sure, you may have only a year to live, but someone still has to pay the car insurance and walk the dog.

Hollywood doesn't portray it that way. Drama is the stock and trade of movies, so important events are accompanied by spectacular music. That alerts us to the significance of the event. A good filmmaker knows how to focus audience attention on information or action or characters that are vital to the story.

Real life doesn't often work that way. We don't have the benefit of Steven Spielberg directing our attention to the truly significant events around us. And, we still have to mow the grass, or rake the leaves, or shovel snow.

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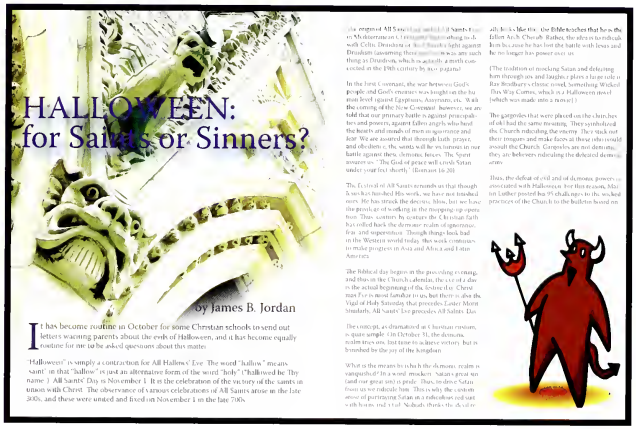
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ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

The last issue of the Witness featured an article on Halloween by James Jordan. Not everyone agreed with Mr. Jordan's conclusions regarding the holiday.



Dear Editor,
I applaud you for the excellence that you have portrayed in the Witness. Including an article on Halloween is, in my opinion, very appropriate during this time of year. [Regarding James B. Jordan, author of the last issue's article "Celebrate Halloween?"] I realize that he is the head of a ministry that specializes in church history, and I have contacted his organization to request a list of sources that he used in writing his article. I have not yet heard from them. In my own brief research, I consulted not only traditional evangelical sources, but I also went directly to those who take Halloween so seriously that they consider it a holy day — Pagans and Wiccans. I couldn't find anything that substantiated [Mr. Jordan's] statements. In fact, if his stand is indeed correct, I would be willing to reconsider my own position.

Annie Teshera Glass

Oh my! Halloween: for Saints or Sinners? The article in the September/October issue of the AC Witness greatly disturbed and alarmed me ... Mr. Jordan proceeds to give the origin of Halloween, but only presents partial facts, brushing off the ones that he doesn't agree with by labeling them "so-called." Tell that to the practicing Druids and New Agers in Bellingham, Washington. Druidism was/is not a myth, but an actual religion in which followers dress up in grotesque and terrifying costumes, not with the idea of mocking Satan but rather to hide from him. They hope to blend in so well with witches and demons that they will be spared harm from them.

Mr. Jordan says that "'Trick or treat' doubtless originated simply enough: something for kids to do." My sources state that the Celts believed that when the spirits came to your house, you had better treat them, or they would trick you. Mr. Jordan further states that "there is no reason to pour cold water on an innocent custom like this," but my idea of what is innocent must be radically different from his. Mr. Jordan continues to say that he "doesn't have the resources to check the historical origins of all Halloween customs." The resources

that I checked out all refute Mr. Jordan's "don't worry, be happy, these won't hurt you" suppositions.

All Saints' Day, a Christian Memorial day, was first celebrated in the month of May and that date was changed to November 1 by the year 900. Yes, another name for All Saints' Day was All Hallows, which later did become shortened to Halloween. Yet, during this same time there were those who worshipped a horned god. Most of the time this was actually a goat, bull or ram, but sometimes it was a man or woman dressed up to look like one. I don't believe these people were worshipping with the idea of ridiculing Satan. They had quite the practices, and even though Christianity was spreading, the religion of the horned god was far more exciting to them. Not only was the religion of the horned god in practice, but also the worship of the dead.

Philip Carr-Gomm, Chosen Chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, in his *Laments of the Druid Tradition* writes, "The dead are honored and feasted, not as the dead, but as the living spirits of loved ones and of guardians who hold the root-wisdom of the tribe. With the coming of Christianity, this festival was turned into Hallowe'en (31 October), All Hallows [All Saints Day] (1 November), and [All Souls Day] (2 November). Here we can see most clearly the way in which Christianity built on the Pagan foundations it found rooted in these isles." Even the Pagans and Druids believe in Halloween, not as just a day to remember the dead, but as living spirits! Yet, Mr. Jordan contends that this is a harmless activity for Christians.

All Hallows' Eve was not originally a Christian holiday, as Mr. Jordan wants us to believe, but as Isaac Bonewits, a neopagan, writes in his essay, *The Real Origins of Halloween*, "The Christian Church was unable to get the people to stop celebrating this holiday, so they simply sprinkled a little holy water on it and gave it new names, as they did with other Paleopagan holidays and customs." Try as they might, the church wasn't able to completely douse the true meaning of Halloween.

Halloween is, in fact, a day witches celebrate. Witches have eight major festivals throughout the year; the major one being October 31, or Halloween. Halloween is the end and beginning of the witch's year. It is during this time that demonic power is let loose and spirits are freed to roam about. Those involved in the occult consider Halloween the best time to contact spirits.

According to The Witches' Voice, Inc., a website, "The Samhain Holiday begins at sundown on October 31st. The nightide was always a time to be wary of walking alone in the countryside. So much more on this Night when the veil between the worlds of humans and spirits was at its thinnest. Traditional lore speaks of the dead returning to visit their kin and the doors to the Lands of the Sidhe (pronounced "shee") or Faery Realm being opened." While Wiccans believe this is the time to contact the dead, Satanists believe it "is a time to perform destruction rituals and get revenge on others." (*Dewitched*, p.138, by Tim Baker). Still, Mr. Jordan says that "there is no solid reason why Christians cannot enjoy it (Halloween) today"?

Nowhere could I find sources that substantiated the claim of Halloween traditions/customs being for the purpose of mocking and ridiculing Satan. Even if this were true, is this really what Jesus would have us do - use our children to make light of Satan and his powers? To my way of thinking this is akin to spiritual abuse of our children! ...

Perhaps, Halloween still is the same as All Saints' Day, as it supposedly used to be, but who in our culture knows or openly celebrates that? Certainly none of my neighbors, the majority of whom attend church. Even when we send out our children trick or treating, dressed in something as benign as Raggedy Andy, we are stating to the world that we acknowledge Halloween. Not the Halloween that is a memorial to the Christian saint, but a Halloween that is full of Satanic forces and celebrated with great glee by the Pagans and Wiccans. Here in the Pacific Northwest, Halloween has become a bigger deal than Christmas, complete with it's own colored lights of orange and black.

According to my Pagan and Wiccan sources, Halloween is a real holiday in which they worship the dead and commune with the spirits. If this is not of Satan, then what is? God even goes so far as to forbid it in Deuteronomy 18:9-13 where he says do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations. Are we not imitating by trick or treating? We need to be very careful of the ways that Satan deceives us into thinking that darkness is really light. The Apostle Paul warns us about Satan masquerading as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Halloween is not of God; it is of Satan.✞

Annie Teshera Glass lives in Sumas, Washington



THE FELLOWSHIP OF WAITING

by David A. Dean

Maybe Today
Maybe Today
Maybe Today
Maybe Today

The weeks leading up to Christmas day — especially for children — can be an agonizingly long time of waiting. The reasons are obvious, and most of us can remember how slowly that time passed in our childhood.

The four Sundays of the church's Advent season are also a waiting time. That's when pastors and their congregations prepare for Christmas by reliving the ancient Jews' longing for their Messiah to come. We join searching their Scriptures as we enter into the fellowship of waiting. Their hope was grounded on a handful of Old Testament predictions, among which Isaiah 9:6-7 remains for us — as for them — one of the most precious:

> "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
> and the government will be on his shoulders.
> And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
> Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
> He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
> establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on."

The Holy Spirit guided the prophet Isaiah as he recorded this promise in the form of Hebrew poetry, one characteristic of which is the repetition of a truth in parallel words or phrases: "child is born" and "son is given" (v. 6); "government on his shoulders" (v. 6) and "he will reign on David's throne" (v. 7); "establishing it" and "upholding it;" with "justice" and "righteousness" (v. 7); of his government there will be no end" and "from that time on" (v. 7). A detailed study of the passage's literary form would undoubtedly prove fruitful. But for our purposes, the Hebrew parallelism here serves to demonstrate that Isaiah is emphasizing two aspects of Christ's coming.



A LOVING SAVIOR TO COME

The text first brings to prominence Christ's humanity. "To us a child is born, to us a son is given." He came as a genuinely human person. He came into our time and space as a child, into an Israelite home as a son, and was born with a truly human nature. The apostles expand on this truth. John points out that "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Another observes that "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity" (Hebrews 2:14). According to Paul, Christ took "the very nature of a servant" and was "made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7).

Isaiah further highlights Jesus' personal nature by enumerating his names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Each title emphasizes his personal nature and activities. On the human side, Jesus lovingly counsels and rules peacefully; on his divine side, he is the Almighty God who always maintains a fatherly relationship with his people. As Isaiah elsewhere observes, this child will be *Emmanuel* — Hebrew for "God with us" (7:14).

What better emphasis could summarize Christ's first coming? In Jesus, God demonstrated his personal concern for his needy creatures. So the Father commanded Joseph "to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And Paul looks back on Jesus' coming to note that "God was reconciling the world unto himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Christ's personal coming into this world constituted the most profound expression of the most perfect love. God so loved the world that he gave his Son. This is the message of Christmas, one which fulfills the deepest longing of those who waited for Jesus to come.

A POWERFUL SOVEREIGN TO COME

At the same time, anyone who carefully reads Isaiah 9:6-7 observes a second emphasis. The coming Messiah is not merely a loving person, or only a Suffering Servant. He is also a powerful and peaceful ruler, who will appear in transcendent power and magnificent glory. "The government will be on his shoulders. ... Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom



... with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." To the extent that those who waited Jesus' first coming understood these words, how disappointed they must have been that Jesus did not become an earthly king. The disciples could not have been alone in wondering, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The answer was "No."

What are we to conclude from Isaiah's second emphasis on Christ as king since it did not transpire during his earthly ministry? Obviously, we have no right to assume that Isaiah was wrong in this prediction. Jesus himself guaranteed us that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Besides, other Bible passages confirm that Jesus will reign as the supreme Sovereign. Consider two examples: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Revelations 11:15), and "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). The evidence on Christ's kingly rule is so clear that we should expect our Lord's ministry to include an earthly reign even though that kingdom may not yet have come in its fullness.

OUR LORD TO COME A SECOND TIME

Our Savior will completely establish his kingdom only following his second advent at the end of the age. In writing about 700 BC, Isaiah predicted various aspects of Jesus' future ministry as Messiah. And in this Christmas text (9:6-7), he promises both Jesus' first advent ("a son is born") and his second coming ("he will reign on David's throne"), but without calling attention to the length of time between the two future ministries. Bible students designate Isaiah's device as "prophetic foreshortening." To the biblical writer, the certainty and glory of future events is more important than any time interval which may separate them. Isaiah finds them so crucially important that he easily mentions them in the same breath — even though they will be separated in time. You and I live in that "in-between time."

The Advent season approaches us. How can we, who live after Christ has already come, share the same waiting experience of people (like, for example, Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:33-38) who lived before he came? We can do it because we also are waiting for Christ to come. Building on what he did when he first came, we wait longingly for what he will do when he comes again.

WAITING FOR HIM TO COME AGAIN

We desire the fullness of Christ's kingdom at his return. In his life and death and resurrection, God's reign appeared in human history. Jesus healed the sick, forgave sins, made atonement, and defeated death. Our joy in that beginning fuels the flames of our longing for his complete conquest of evil.

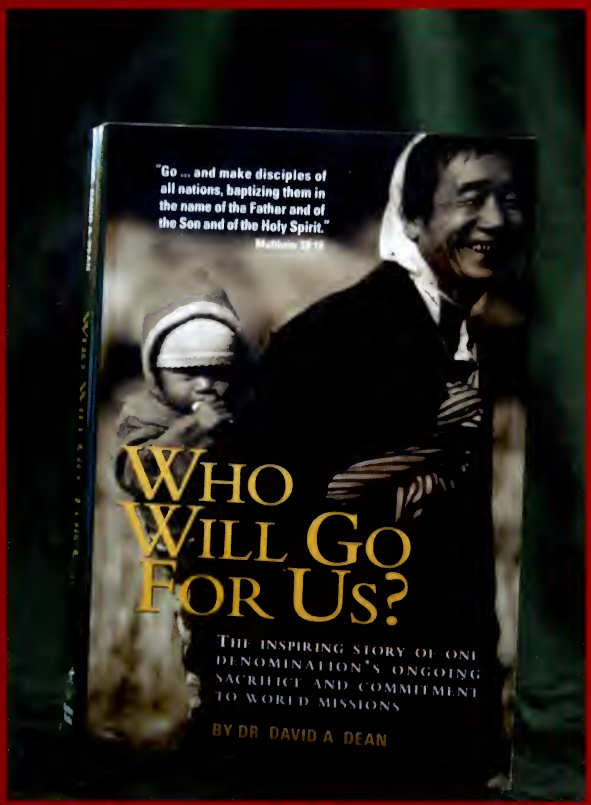
In contrast to the obscurity and humility of our Lord Jesus' first coming, he will return in power and universal glory. He will demonstrate himself to be the true King of kings and Lord of lords. It is then that he will rescue from the grave all those

who sleep in him, banish their weakness and frailty, and crown them with immortality. Likewise, he will summon all of sinful humanity from physical death to stand before him in judgment. Then our Lord will vanquish Satan and all his forces of evil, casting them into the judgment fires of Gehenna. In his sovereignty, Jesus Christ will then renew the present heavens and earth resulting in a restored creation free from all sin and decay.

While Christ's eternal kingdom will be more than a military and political accomplishment, its inauguration will defeat all foes and rule over the nations. And then the same Person who loved us and gave himself for us will dwell with us and welcome us into the perfection of his glorious kingdom. There God will rule lovingly over a people who joyfully do his will in a renewed creation into which sin will never again venture.



Right now we are properly waiting for Christmas to come with its heart-warming memories and glad celebration. Yet additionally, thoughtful Christians are waiting for Jesus to come again. His return is certain and one well worth waiting for. And in our anticipation of Christ's return we gratefully enter into ancient Israel's fellowship of waiting.✞



Who Will Go For Us? is a story of the history of Advent Christian Missions around the world from the earliest days to the present time. Dr. David A. Dean, a gifted theologian and author of this work as well as several other books, has painted a rich narrative picture of the great cost paid by the men, women and their families who have labored and been obedient to the "Great Commission." This book was first released this summer and is available through the Venture Bookstore at the General Conference Offices. To order, you may call 1-800-676-0694 or email venture@adventchristian.org

A Little Town of Bethlehem

On three consecutive evenings in the second week of December, the little community of Bethlehem, N.C., which is located near Hickory, N.C., reenacts the Christmas story. In the field beside the Fellowship Advent Christian Church, nine local churches are responsible for creating 27 displays of various scenes telling the familiar story. All participants are dressed in biblical costumes and act the part of being a citizen of Bethlehem at that time in history.

How did this event get started? Several years ago, county commissioner and Fellowship Church elder, Wes Bolick, went to South Carolina with some church friends to see a similar production.



1. Visitors drive past scenes of the Christmas Story



2. In the costume room getting dressed in biblical clothing



3. Mary and the angel Gabriel

They were so impressed with the effectiveness of telling the Christmas story in this way that We presented the idea to the Bethlehem Community Development Association, and it was successfully attempted (with the support of the Ministerial Association and churches).

This year will be the fourth year of the Bethlehem Drive-Thru. There isn't a lot of advertising, but last year approximately 1400 visitors went past the census taker's booth! Many said the drive-thru was a highlight of their Christmas season.



6. The Magi from the east

As visitors approach Bethlehem, vehicles are directed past Scripture-labeled scenes on their way into the city. After driving through the city, drivers are invited to leave their cars in the church parking lot and go inside for refreshments. Inside there are people ready to help visitors don appropriate biblical costumes to walk through Bethlehem and experience it.



5. A Roman palace guard



4. King Herod in his palace

The tour begins in Nazareth, a town in Galilee, with the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to announce, *"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." Mary answered, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:28-33; 38 NIV).*

From Nazareth visitors approach Jerusalem, seeing King Herod in his palace and the Magi. As the scripture reads, *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw*



7. Tax Registration



8. Shepherds watching their flock



9. An angel appearing to the shepherds

his star in the east
and have come to worship him'"
(Matthew 2:2 NIV).

Next, *"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world ... and everyone went to his own town to register" (Luke 2:1,3 NIV).* Multitudes of citizens of the Roman Empire came to Bethlehem and stopped at the "tax registration office."

Getting closer to Bethlehem, *"There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger'" (Luke 2:8-12 NIV).*

In the city itself are booths of various kinds, depicting life in biblical times. Some of the shops one encounters are: a money-changer, produce stand, bakery, dry goods, baskets, cobbler, carpenter shop and blacksmith. Villagers walk the streets, going about their business, and Roman soldiers ride through the town on horseback, keeping order.



13. Roman soldiers keeping order



14. Blacksmith Shop



15. Bakery



10. Villagers in their home



11. Marketplace



12. Dry Goods Store

After traveling past the shops there is an inn where Mary and Joseph stopped, hoping to get a room for a few days. *"While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:6-7 NIV).*

Drive-thru visitors read the Scriptural account of Christmas as they enter Bethlehem and are also given a pamphlet that describes "The Rest Of The Story" – how God sent his son for the purpose of dying on the cross for each individual who would accept God's gift of forgiveness and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Visitors departing Bethlehem are reminded of that part of the Christmas story by an empty cross outside the town, with the scripture, *"... surely this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39 NIV).* As the pamphlet says, "When you know Jesus, Christmas is truly a joyous season!"

(This year's Bethlehem Drive-Thru will be held, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, December 9-11, from 6:00 – 9:00. Everyone is invited to come and experience this great event!)✝



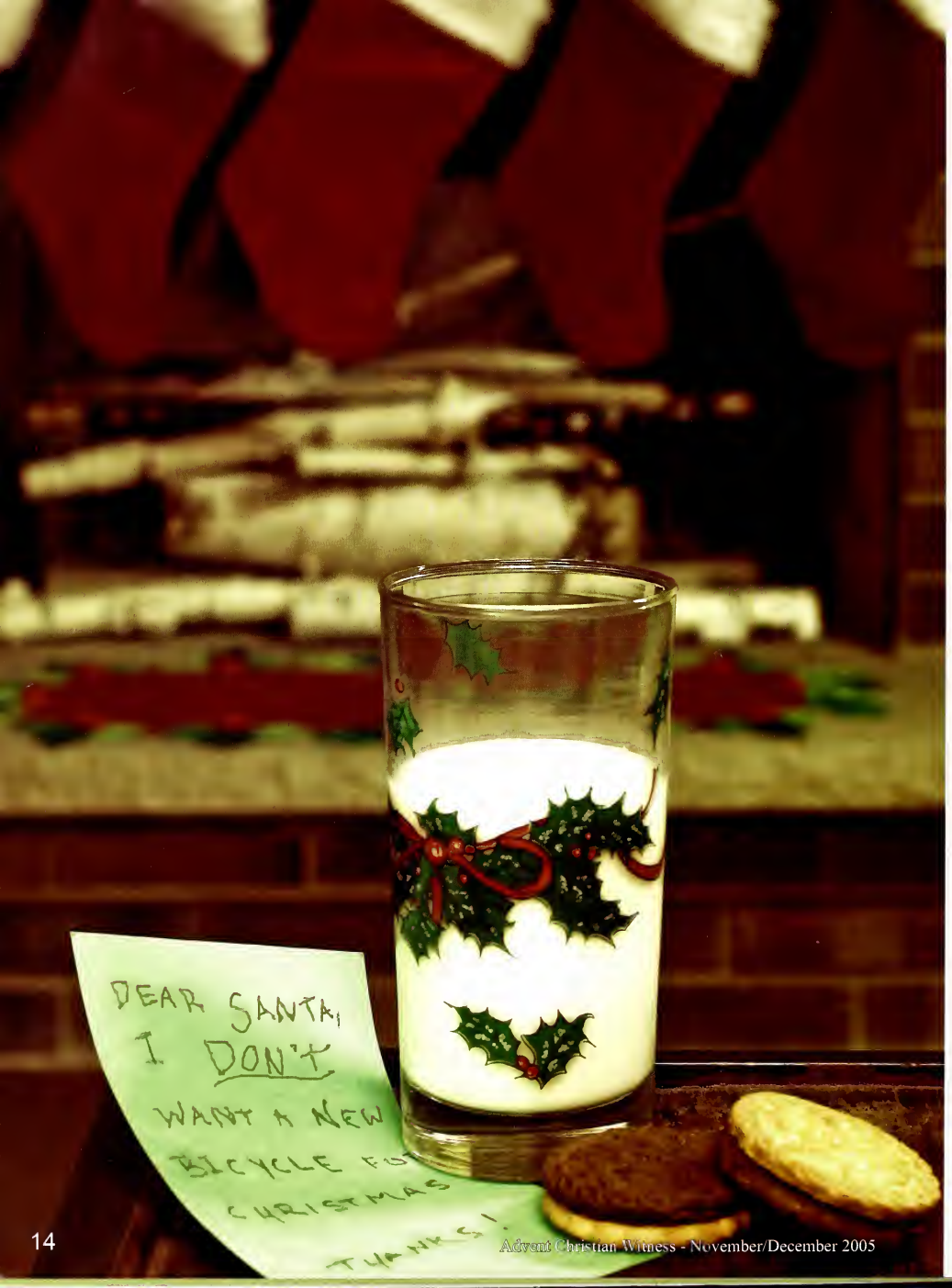
16. The Inn



17. Manger Scene



18. The empty cross


DEAR SANTA,
I DON'T
WANT A NEW
BICYCLE FOR
CHRISTMAS
THANKS!

The Perfect Gift

By Steve Ross

A recent headline caught my eye. It read, "Holiday Giving Blurs Distinction Between Want and Need." It's true that for many of us, this season of giving tends to touch all of our impulsive, impractical urges. What else explains the age-old dilemma of toys vs. clothes?!! So the quest for "the perfect gift" continues. What is it, exactly, that defines "the perfect gift?" James 1:17 says, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights."* So for the next few moments, let's consider together this idea of "the perfect gift."

Like you, the Ross family has many memorable stories of Christmas past. And like the gifts we exchange during this season, the stories come in all different shapes and sizes, and each one with a different nametag. It seems, however, that we're not so anxious to open those stories that have our name attached! Well, unfortunately for me, I'm about to open one of my "gifts" for you, by way of illustration.

As young boys my brother Brent and I loved to ride our bikes. What kid doesn't! My brother, three years my elder, had graduated to the two-wheel world, while I was quite satisfied, however hopeless, to remain firmly in my training-wheel existence. I didn't quite get the idea that it was a bicycle! And so my parents determined that it should come to pass at some point before I reached 16 years of age, decided this would be the year ... the year for the new bikes. Thus, after months of slaving and saving, Christmas day arrived. The new bicycles, in all of their red glitter and glory were placed beneath the tree. These gifts would be front and center, first and foremost on this Christmas morning. And with great anticipation, all waited for the exuberance of youthful glee and joy, as the four boys bounded down the stairs, with the youngest — yours truly —in the lead. You know, it's true, I think, that there are some moments in life that seem to unfold in slow motion before us, and perhaps this was one of those for my parents! As the family watched my brother Brent leaping high with happiness, they turned to hear my own expression of stunned disbelief when I blurted: "You know I can't ride a two-wheeler!!" Funny, I don't remember much else about that Christmas!

Unable to appreciate it at that moment, I didn't realize that my parents had given me "the perfect gift." This gift was exactly what I needed. Trapped in my world of training wheels, I couldn't foresee the freedom this new bike would bring. As a result, stubbornly persistent as I was — or was it persistently stubborn — I wasn't able to truly receive this "perfect gift," and in fact, continued for some time in the cautious comfort of my training-wheel world.

The Bible tells me of "a perfect gift" that was given. I hear it again, from Luke 2:10, as the angel proclaims to the shepherds, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."* Savior, I ask? Why should I need a Savior? And as I listen closer still, I hear the words of the angel to Joseph, in Matthew 1:21, *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid; Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* One who will save his people from their sins? And I realize that must mean me. Without salvation from my sin, I am forever separated from God. The gift of the Savior, then, is indeed "perfect," for it is exactly what I need.

The Apostle Paul clearly describes this "gift" in Romans, chapter five. In speaking of Adam, Paul says, *"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many. Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men!"* This Jesus, this Savior, this "gift," is exactly what I need! What will I do with this gift?

What will I do with this new bike? Remember, for some time I remained stubbornly persistent — or persistently stubborn. There came a day, however, (and yes, before I turned 16) when I gave in, learned to ride a two-wheeler, and experienced all that my new bike was able to provide. A two-wheeler!! Oh, what freedom, what liberty, what joy! Still some falls, yes, but what a new life! All I wanted to do was ride my new bike. I realized that this truly was "the perfect gift!" The gift that was exactly what I needed soon became all that I longed for!

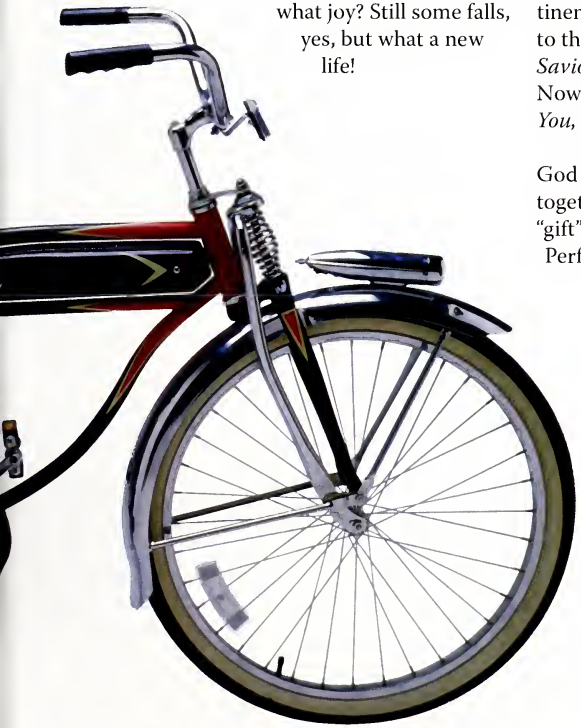
Another Ross family Christmas memory for me is how all the gifts would slowly appear beneath the tree in the weeks and days approaching Christmas. With each new gift, I would creep low, straining to see the name on the tag. Could it be, do I see, beneath this tree, another gift, and it's for me?? Packages piled high — long and tall, bright and small. And as I reach to attempt a little shake here, or a rattle there, it quickly becomes clear that each gift is tightly secured, with so much scotch tape on each edge and seam that I think I hear the gift cry out, "Don't even think about it!"

What about you? The good news of Christmas



is that there is a "perfect gift," on a perfect tree. Come near and see, for this gift has your name on it. But this tree, you say, does not look like what you expected. This tree stands high and reaches far. The top of this tree extends to the very heavens, and its base reaches to the depths of a conquered hell. You note that it has just two branches, reaching out as far as the east is from the west. And there is no need to search for "the gift," for it hangs on the entire tree. And then you realize ... the Christ **in** the cradle is the Christ **on** the cross. A perfect gift, on a perfect tree, and this gift is for you!

So, how long will you stubbornly persist in sin? Won't you receive this gift, and experience the perfect cross, which holds a perfect Savior, who offers "the perfect gift" of salvation? For isn't this gift exactly what you need? Oh, what freedom, what liberty, what joy? Still some falls, yes, but what a new life!



This Christmas Eve we will likely continue a long-standing family tradition, as each of the girls selects a gift to open. A gift that, perhaps, they have been "eyeing" for some time. We have had some wonderful and very interesting times over the years with gifts opened on Christmas Eve.

Haven't you been looking at and wondering about "this gift" long enough? Why not open and receive "the perfect gift" that has your name on it? Right here, right now. What a Christmas to remember this would be! For when you receive "this gift," you will not only have exactly what you need; you will also soon realize, even as I did with my new bike, that "this gift" is all you ever wanted, and all you long for.

There is another headline we must not miss this season. And though some would say that this is just "old" news, it was never more timely and pertinent than it is today. It is the message of the angel to the shepherds: *"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."* Now, that is good news! *"Today, A Savior, Born To You, Christ the Lord!"*

God bless you throughout this blessed season, as together we celebrate and rejoice in the wonderful "gift" of our Savior. My Savior, your Savior ... "The Perfect Gift." ✞

Steve Ross lives in Albany, N.Y., and works as program director for regional perinatal outreach at Albany Medical Center.

ThanksGivingThanksGivingThanks



By Rev. James Taber

I am finding fewer and fewer thankful people today. After all, doesn't society tell us again and again through different mediums that we deserve what we get? If you feel you are getting what is rightfully yours, the sense of "gift" and consequent "**gratitude**" is diminished!

In the familiar parable of the ten lepers, you find that attitude present among nine of them. If Jesus is a "Holy Man" whose primary mission is that of doing good, it is only right — and to be expected — that he should heal me and deliver me from my misery! But it is to be noted that only one of the ten lepers was made "whole" — the one who returned to give him thanks. Jesus said, *"Your faith has made you whole" (Luke 17:19).*

As Christians, our lives must be always characterized by a deep, abiding gratitude. Learn to look for things to give thanks for. Matthew Henry, after he had been robbed, wrote these words in his diary: "Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; Second, because although they took my money, they did not take my life; Third because although they took my all, it was not much; Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, *"In everything give thanks" (I Thessalonians 5:18).* Try today to express Thanksgiving in your life and watch what it does for both you and others. Indeed *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Psalms 92:1).*✞

Rev. James Taber is pastor of the First Advent Christian Church in Morganton, N.C.

Givers and Takers





By Larry Knowles

Years ago a wise and esteemed elderly lady in our church named Irma Wallace offered me some strange counsel. She said, "Don't try and do anything for God."

At the time I had only a vague clue as to what she meant. But over time the truth of those words has grown on me. While on the surface they seem at odds with certain statements in scripture, they get to the very root of the way God relates to us if we are Christians.

Irma's point was this: God is always a benefactor or giver, and anyone who comes to him must come purely as a beneficiary or receiver. Why? It's because he doesn't need us; there is no lack in him to which we can offer our contribution. Even more, it's because he is actually dishonored when his children try to come in any way other than as dependent, insufficient, needy receivers of grace.

This is all scriptural. *"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and*

breath and everything" (Acts 17: 24,25). *"If I were hungry, I would not consult you; for the world and all that is in it is mine.... Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me"* (Psalm 50:12, 15). Notice the point: God lacks for and needs nothing. And notice the sequence: the way we glorify him is by receiving grace happily from him. We tend to think these two are separate, or worse, that giving glory must precede receiving grace.

At first it sounds foreign to suggest that God must always be the giver and not the receiver. Aren't we told to give him glory? Aren't we told to sacrifice of ourselves for him? And doesn't the Bible say everywhere to serve him?



The answers to those questions are "yes." But what's often glossed over is how terms like "sacrifice," "giving" and "glorify" are really defined in scripture. Simply put, you'll look in vain in scripture for any reference to "giving God" something that leaves him with more, and us with less, than either started with. Instead, all our "giving" and "doing" turns out (if done properly) to be an exchange of something lesser for something greater. We remain receivers in every transaction with him. And by relating to God this way, he is glorified, since it displays his power and goodness — not ours.

If being a perpetual beneficiary sounds like it makes me the center of the gospel, consider this: when a person dying of cancer is helped by a grant from the Robert W. Johnson Foundation, who gets the glory? The sick man or woman? No, the benefactor is magnified. How much more true of God.

Simply put, you'll look in vain in scripture for any reference to "giving God" something that leaves him with more, and us with less, than either started with.

Try another scriptural example: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6). At first, coming to God diligently requires a sacrifice of time, energy and personal leisure. It *seems* like a sacrifice at least. That is, until you read that it results in a reward of an unspecified nature. When you obey this verse, does it wind up leaving you with less and God with more? Quite the contrary!

"But" someone might say, "that verse says we offer up faith. God longs for our faith; it's something that he wants us to give him." Once again, this glosses over what faith really is. If you see it as some kind of payment stoically presented to God, you've got it backward. Faith itself is a resting, a kind of contented, surrendered confiding of a child in a parent. What's more, the very capacity to believe is a gift of God and is not self-manufactured: *"By grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2: 8).

Even "serving the Lord" turns out in the end to be something that we are not benefactors in performing. Peter *said "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 4:11). God never gives orders to do anything without also insisting on providing the means to do it. Even in his commands to serve him, he remains a

giver, and we remain receivers.
This might sound like great news except for one thing: we don't exactly like being beneficiaries all the time. We want to feel like we've contributed. We want to earn a few things by the work of our hands. We want to feel and appear resourceful. We don't like being on the receiving end too much. No one wants to be a welfare recipient.

You can try that approach in the world and, perhaps, reach some earthly level of success. One thing's for sure: Christians may never take that approach with God himself. Not only is it futile, but it's deadly.

The reason? Because at the root of such an attitude is pride. Self sufficiency, self direction, self reliance and self esteem are the aim of the "puffed up" heart. We want to be movers, shakers and contributors because it says something about us and it does something for us. But pride is what sunk Satan himself at the beginning, and scripture is full of "woes" to those who perpetuate that spirit.

In fact, if you insist on giving something to God, or on doing something for him, offer up this: your pride. Hand it over and begin to really honor him by letting him supply you and satisfy you with what he offers, much as an unassuming child would do with a parent that they're happy to look to and receive from.

In fact, if you really want to give anything to God, or do anything for him, do this: offer up your pride.

By the way, all this talk about receiving from God doesn't pertain to material health and wealth. It's not a Cadillac that the author of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote 4:11. While material blessings are often thrown in, the New Testament is glaringly silent about material prosperity. Instead, the currency it speaks of involves things like faith, love, victory over sin and the freedom to enjoy God. This is true even in the midst of suffering, which is no more than God's appointed tool to deepen our capacity to know, enjoy and make him known.

These kinds of gifts may sound vague and unsubstantial. But aren't they the things that down deep we really want for ourselves, loved ones and friends? What good are earthly gains or healthy bodies when had by people who can't make it work with God and each other?

An applicant to Vernon Hall once said to me, "I don't want any welfare. If I'm going to come here it'll be by paying my own way." Translated that meant "I refuse to be a beneficiary of anyone." May the Lord help us to understand that in the spiritual



realm "looking for a handout" is the only way to be saved, not to mention the best way to give God glory.✞



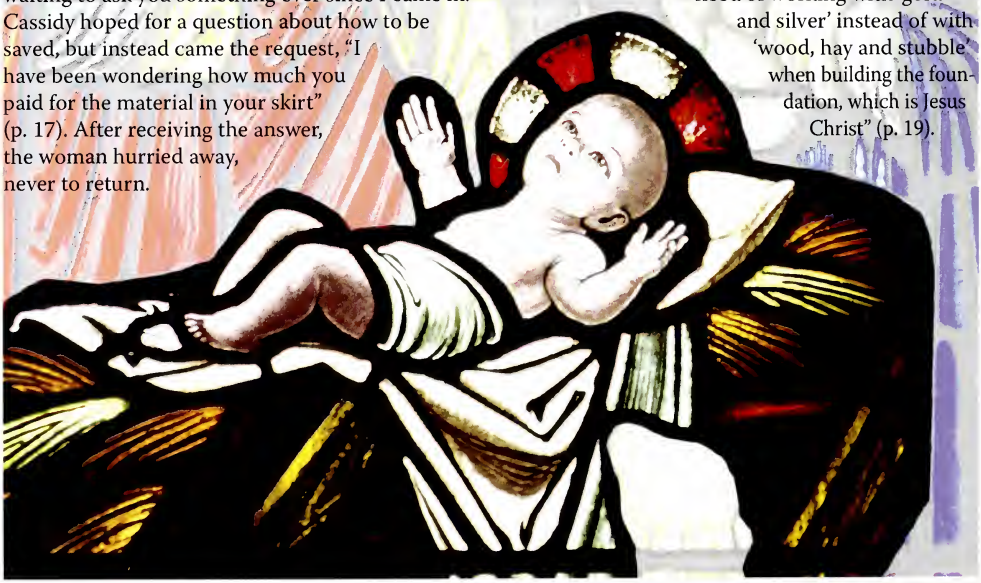
Mr. Larry Knowles , Jr. serves as President of Advent Christian Retirement Communities. He and his wife Joanne have four children: Kristen, Larry III, Katie, and Eli.

Humble Beginnings

By Pastor Sam Walsh

Bertha Cassidy was an Advent Christian missionary to China in the first part of the 20th century. In her book, *China Adventure*, she recalls how difficult it was to preach and teach when the Chinese were afraid of the "foreigners." Out of curiosity, Chinese women came to the chapel to hear the singing. Others listened to the bible stories for the wrong reasons. One woman remained after a Wednesday meeting, and Miss Cassidy hopefully inquired of the woman, "Have you some question you would like to ask?" "Oh, yes, I have been waiting to ask you something ever since I came in." Cassidy hoped for a question about how to be saved, but instead came the request, "I have been wondering how much you paid for the material in your skirt" (p. 17). After receiving the answer, the woman hurried away, never to return.

Cassidy writes, "Was there any fruit from those early attempts at preaching the gospel? At least the worker was learning much, not only in regard to the language but in understanding the ways and the thoughts of the people among whom we were living. Foundation work does not show. We want people to listen to our message, but they feel the need of watching our lives to see whether the message is worth listening to! And I learned from the lives and the faith of other missionaries — especially of my mother and my stepfather — the need of working with 'gold and silver' instead of with 'wood, hay and stubble' when building the foundation, which is Jesus Christ" (p. 19).



As we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus in December, let us consider the humility of Jesus, *"Who, being in very nature god, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped," (Philippians 2:6).* He made himself of no reputation. He was born in a place for animals, and laid in a feed trough. *"He took the form of a servant" (Philippians. 2:7).* He came in the likeness of a man. Jesus did not suddenly appear on the Judean landscape 2000 years ago in the blaze of military glory and conquest that some people expected of God Almighty. He was born an infant, had diapers of some sort and made goo-goo sounds that all parents adore. He humbled himself. In order to be the perfect Savior, he walked in our shoes, but without sin. He was tempted to take shortcuts, especially to avoid the cross. But Jesus humbled himself, and became obedient to death — even death on a cross. He identified fully with humanity, with our pain, with our brokenness, with our enemy death. The perfect Man was also the perfect Savior. He died in our place, and rose again, the Conqueror over death. Jesus humbled himself.

With humility comes patience. Jesus was patient to complete his mission from manger to the cross. He was patient to wait for a later exaltation. Consider the humility of Jesus. He knew who he was. He knew what his mission was. Yet for 30 years, Jesus lived among the people of Israel, and had NO following. He had no disciples for 30 years! Consider the great love and humility of Jesus Christ to be nearly anonymous through the first 30 years of his life.

The sequence of Jesus' patient life gives an example of humility for us to follow. Just as Jesus was patient with his disciples, so we must be patient with others to grow in faith. Even Jesus took three years to train new disciples. We must be patient to allow time for the spiritual growth and maturation of believers. Just as Jesus humbles himself to receive the awaiting persecution and death, so we must count it all joy when we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

Humility precedes glory in the life of Christ. *"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).* Just as he was patient to wait for exaltation, so must we be patient to wait for our new, perfect bodies. As we live in humility now, we learn to depend on God for everything, from sweeping success in a business venture to the loving words of forgiveness for an angry family encounter. We get impatient with God to work in our lives, to help us move through problems, or to help us find our calling in life. The humility of Christ takes shape in our lives as patience.

Let us continue to build our churches on Jesus Christ. Let us focus our ministry activity on proclaiming Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior. Let's put humility into practice by redirecting attention from ourselves to Jesus Christ. Our goal in the church is not to teach morality or good behavior — only that Jesus Christ saves. Newcomers should find love expressed freely when they attend our churches — love that isn't manufactured. Love is fruit of the Spirit from a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Attractive love radiates from Christ's love in us. Here is where humility comes into play. Jesus Christ must be the center of attention.

Remember the humility of Jesus Christ and his patience to remain in God's will and unrecognized. *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).* Remember Bertha Cassidy's admonishment to build on the true foundation that is Jesus Christ. Followers of Jesus are clothed in the humility of Christ.✞

Mr. Sam Walsh is the pastor of the AC Church in Baraboo, Wisconsin





Advent Christian
General Conference
President
Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

START EARLY

Each year in our church we face the same challenge as we think about raising money to support Penny Crusade, the Advent Christian denomination's primary source of money for missions and the rest of the ACGC budget. We often ask questions like, "Do we have a fundraiser?" And, if so, what kind? Or "Should we conduct a faith-promise pledge drive?" And each year we find ourselves arriving at the final stretch of the challenge, hoping to meet our goal.

This year, however, we took a different approach. Prior to the launching of our 2005 budget we decided to challenge our people to developing a consistent pattern of giving that would reach our goal and beyond. With this in mind, we encouraged our people to give throughout the year a percentage of their finances to World Missions, divided among *a church building project in Kenya, a short-term missions trip to Honduras, and to Penny Crusade.*

Each person was invited to pray about what they might give beyond their tithe to one, two or all three of the mission needs. All they had to do was to designate the amount on the memo line of their check. The important thing was to *start early* and keep on giving.

An added blessing was uncovered in that once the church building project in Kenya was completed, we asked our people to transfer their support to the mission trip. Many complied willingly. And again, after the short-term mission trip to Honduras was over, people began to give their money to Penny Crusade.

Here's where it gets exciting! Last week, while attending a conference board meeting, I shared that West Jax was about to begin their 2005 Penny Crusade campaign on September 18th. The most exciting thing of all was the fact that even though we hadn't begun Penny Crusade yet, we had already raised $7000, a thousand more than the entire 2004 budget figure for Penny Crusade! Now, that's exciting!

In a day when "cash flow" is regularly a concern at ACGC, perhaps we should all seek to give on a more consistent schedule — week by week — in an attempt to avoid the dry spells. It just might make a difference, not only at the local level, but on a denominational level too! Our goal is $10,000 for the Penny Crusade, and I am absolutely confident that we will reach our goal. While our goal as a denomination may seem very large to some of us, if we work together on a weekly basis, it just may be easier than we think.✝

(Editorial continued)

The way most people think of Christmas is a prime example of Hollywood's influence. The Christmas story is invariably presented as high drama: A misjudged unwed couple "in trouble" is forced by a ruthless government to journey for miles on foot and donkey. They face difficult odds searching for shelter from harsh weather, and then the woman's labor pains commence. Overcoming ostracism, injustice and inhuman conditions, the young mother finally gives birth to the Savior. Then, just after the baby has been cleaned up and properly swaddled, shepherds and wise men appear, and the world stands still to stare in wonder at that amazing Baby.

I don't think the real-life version would have appeared nearly so compelling. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem for taxes. So what? At least he didn't have to deal with the IRS, the DMV, the DOT, or get "nickel-and-dimed to death" paying for permits, fees, and inspections. Sure, it was a long walk, but every trip he took was a long walk. As a Jewish male he went to Jerusalem three times a year for religious festivals; and each trip was just as far.

He and Mary stayed in the stable because the inn was full. Big deal. Neither place had running water, electricity, or room service. And having a baby there was not a major disadvantage over giving birth in Nazareth. Neither location offered ivy-league obstetricians and epidurals.

Most of the hardships we imagine them having were part of everyone's life in those days. People were inconvenienced and taxed by heartless governments, and not a few women delivered babies at inopportune times in unfamiliar locations. I don't see Steven Spielberg rushing to buy a script with this plotline — there's really not enough obvious drama or action.

That's not to say nothing significant occurred! On the contrary, one of the greatest events in the history of Creation transpired. But it wasn't much noticed. People still had to eat, walk the dog, and pay their car insurance. "Another baby is born — I hope it doesn't cry all night. I've got to go to work in the morning."

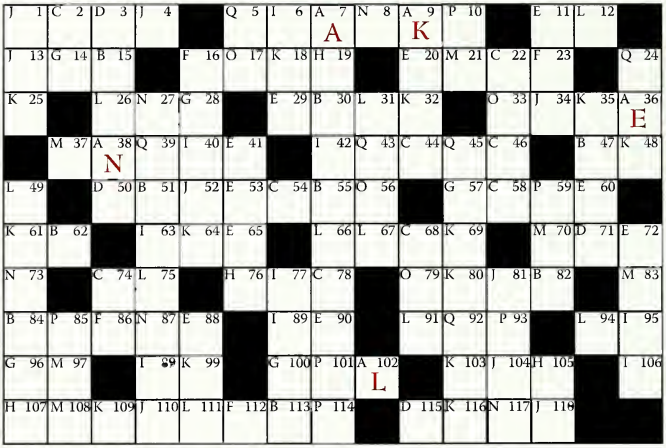
I had a friend who was an artist, a painter. He fiercely guarded his work like a pit bull, unwilling to show anyone a painting before it was finished. But one day he called me with an enthusiasm and excitement I'd never seen before. "You've got to come over and see this!" he said. "I haven't finished it yet, but you've got to see my painting!" I was caught off guard by the invitation, but knew better than to delay. I rushed over to see a masterpiece in the making.

Few people knew Harry was a painter, and no one knew how important this painting was. There was no drama to tip them off. No music or cheering crowd. He was just part of the mundane landscape of their lives. That's what Mary and Joseph appeared to be: mundane landscape in the background of everyone else's lives.

But God, the Master Artist, was too excited to let it go totally unnoticed. Even if the work wasn't finished, He just had to call someone and shout, "Come over and see this!" So he sent his angels to some shepherds. They alone heard the angelic soundtrack that first Christmas night. The Magi would arrive much later.



Some people might suppose the minimal drama implied a lack of value. But eyes of faith see beyond the apparently mundane to behold the Lord of glory arrive in our world via a normal-looking birth. Immanuel, God with us. Come, let us adore Him.✞



SOLVE THE CLUES BELOW, AND FILL IN THE CORRESPONDING LETTERS IN THE PUZZLE TO THE LEFT. THE FIRST ONE IS DONE FOR YOU.

PSALM 105:1–2

A. Part of the leg between the foot and shin — A N K L E / 7 38 9 102 36

B. A promise — 82 113 30 84 51 55 47 15 62

C. Night illumination — 78 44 54 68 22 2 46 58 74

D. Greatly admires oneself — 3 115 71 50

E. Seven large bodies of land — 20 90 29 11 53 72 88 41 60 65

F. Put in as much as possible — 112 86 23 16

G. A woman's wrap — 28 14 100 57 96

H. To have shoes on — 105 76 107 19

I. Gloss over or hide — 106 6 77 89 95 40 42 118 63

J. To work toward an agreement — 81 110 1 98 13 104 34 52 4

K. A cloth to wipe a face or nose — 61 64 25 109 35 32 18 116 48 80 69 99

L. Maternal state — 31 67 94 26 49 111 91 12 75 66

M. Broad pieces of wood — 83 97 21 108 37 70

N. One who is rich, possesses many — 117 103 27 8 73 87

O. A plant that grows on trees, rocks, etc. — 33 17 56 79

P. Related to camels, used as pack animals — 114 101 59 93 85 10

Q. A shifting movement — 43 24 5 92 39 45



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

FIND THESE WORDS FROM LUKE 2:8- 20



angel
baby
shepherds
savior
manger
Mary
Joseph
born
Christ
sign
cloths
praising
glory
peace
news
joy

M A N G E R O T P E S O Y
A R E N C J S H T O L C H
R B K A L O D C H R I S T
B O R N R R S W Y B G H O
O V G H S H E P H E R D S
J E Y B H I R A C T I F A
O A R U M A G K P J B Y V
S M A E I O N N R O A N I
E N M S W Y B G L S B S O
P E I F O L R J E U Y M R
H N P J R P L S I L D J O
G L O R Y A E C A E P W C
J C D T S W E N W I M C U

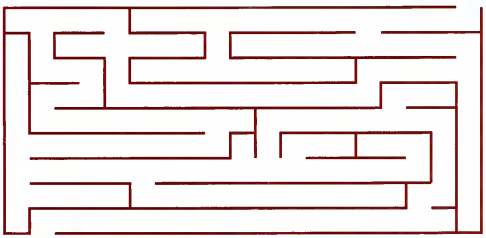
BREAK THE CODE: *Replace the numbers with the correct letters*

1=h	6=s	11=w	16=g
2=i	7=m	12=p	17=r
3=n	8=o	13=b	18=c
4=t	9=d	14=f	19=u
5=a	10=l	15=v	20=e

5 3 9 6 1 20 16 5 15 20
13 2 17 4 1 4 8 1 20 17
14 2 17 6 4 13 8 17 3 , 5
6 8 3 . 6 1 20 11 17 5 12 12 20 9
1 2 7 2 3 18 10 8 4 1 6
5 3 9 12 10 5 18 20 9 1 2 7
2 3 5 7 5 3 16 20 17
13 20 18 5 19 6 20 4 1 20 17 20
11 5 6 3 8 17 8 8 7 14 8 17
4 1 20 7 2 3 4 1 20 2 3 3 .

Help the pilgrims through the maze to find the Indians with food to eat.

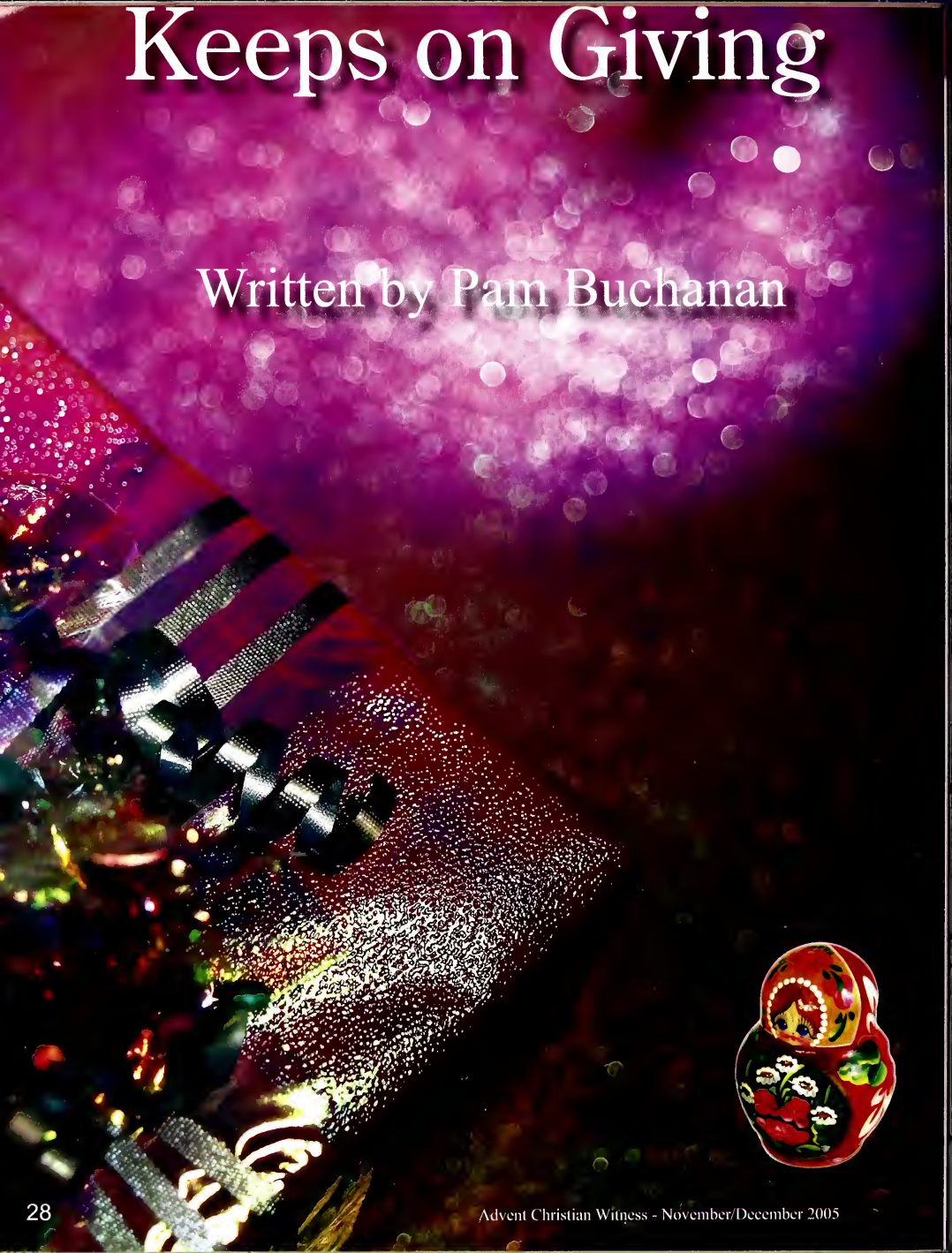






Keeps on Giving

Written by Pam Buchanan



She was born in Carroll County, Virginia on July 5th, 1949 ...

He was born in Galax, Virginia on Feb 4th, 1958 ...

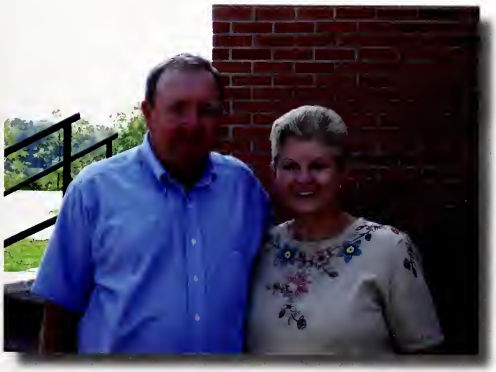
Differences?

1. One was female, the other was male ...
2. One was a summer child; the other was born in the winter ...
3. One was the oldest child; the other was the youngest ...
4. Born in different decades, separated by nine years.

Their connection?

They are siblings, both born to Alvin and Georgia Cox, separated by three other children: Teresa, Mary and Alvin Cox, Jr.





Faye Cox Burnette and her husband, Gene, live in Galax, Virginia. They have been married for 40 years and have two sons, Kenneth and Robert, two daughters-in-law, Sherry and Linda and four grandchildren. Gene and Faye are members of the First Assembly of God Church in Galax.

Faye's Story:

The first hint of pain was in May of 2001. The symptoms of nausea and fatigue sent me to see a doctor. My initial concern was a gall bladder attack, but after several doctor visits, tests and finally a biopsy, I was given the diagnosis of Chronic Liver Disease. This came as quite a shock to me, my husband, Gene, and my family, because I had no alcohol or drug abuse in my past. The cause of the disease was determined to be "Crypto Genetics" which simply meant that I would go to my grave not knowing the cause.

At first, I was told that my cause of death would probably be old age rather

than liver disease, but after treating the symptoms for a year and many visits to specialist physicians, the word "transplant" was introduced. I was transferred to UVA in Charlottesville, Virginia, where my name was added to the transplant list in February, 2003.

I continued to be monitored, the disease continued to progress and finally in June of 2004, my doctor asked the question, "Do you know anyone who would be willing to donate a portion of their liver?"





Michael Cox lives in Princeton, West Virginia with his wife of 21 years, Beverly. Mike and Beverly are members of the Princeton Advent Christian Church, where Michael serves as a deacon and Sunday school teacher.

Michael's Story:

As I became aware of my sister's suffering and observed the decline, naturally I was concerned. I was regularly requesting prayer for my sister among the members of my church family. One Sunday morning, a nurse in our congregation asked if I had considered being a liver donor. With her help, I researched the possibility and discussed the pros and cons with my wife, Beverly. Feeling led by God in my desire to see my sister live, I approached her with the offer of being her living donor. Even though her first response was less than enthusiastic, I decided to begin the process with a family doctor visit to find out my blood type. During that visit, I discovered that our blood types would match but there were other roadblocks, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and the discovery of borderline diabetes. I knew this would be a tough hill to climb, but the desire to help had been divinely planted, and I began a medically-supervised plan of exercise and diet. With God's help, I was able to shed many excess pounds and to correct my medical problems. In God's plan, when the doctor in Charlottesville asked my sister about a liver donor, I was medically suitable to be considered.



Faye and Michael spent much time in Charlottesville over the next few months, undergoing medical tests and interviews in preparation for a transplant which had been scheduled for December 9th, 2004. The night before the transplant, the family spent time together reviewing the process and reassuring one another in the anxious hours before the procedure would begin. Having faith that God was in charge, Michael brought smiles to all as he teased and said, "I hope she doesn't expect anything else from me under the Christmas tree."

The surgical waiting room was full on that day as Faye and Michael's family and friends comforted one another and prayed. The surgery took approximately twelve hours to complete, and tears flowed freely when word was received of a successful surgery. Immediately, hearts and heads were bowed

to express gratitude to God. Both Michael and Faye awoke with concerns for one another.

As their story is being told, a full year has passed and their recovery progresses. Due to Michael's superb health at the time of the surgery, he only had to stay at the hospital for a week. Faye's recovery has been much slower but very steady. We continue to give praise to God for this miracle which began many years ago. You see, even though Faye had never abused alcohol or drugs, Michael was a serious alcoholic at age 24. At his lowest point, he admitted he was an alcoholic and requested entrance to an alcohol rehab facility. He completed the month-long program and remained sober for six months but then relapsed. Next, for his program of rehabilitation, he turned to his mother's Bible. Being a mason by trade, Michael was kept indoors due to the frigid temperatures of winter and, therefore, had the time to read, pray, and weep before the Lord for his sins. Michael remembers spending three weeks in this process of cleansing alone before the Lord. At the end of this time, he prayed for deliverance from the desire for alcohol, and God performed a miracle of complete healing that day. God also performed the miracle of preserving the condition of Michael's liver, making it possible for him to be a donor to his sister many years later.



As this family celebrates Christmas 2005, they have much to reflect upon. Faye and Michael lost their father in November of 2004, one month before the transplant. In April of 2005, Michael lost his father-in-law. Having lived next door to him all of his married life, he also lost a friend, a farming companion, and mentor. And in June of 2005, Michael and Faye lost their mother. Always faithful and encouraging, she succumbed to chronic lung disease just months after celebrating her children's successful transplant surgery. In the midst of much death, this family has experienced the gift of life, a gift that continues to give.

To gain strength as the transplant approached, both Faye and Michael spent much time in God's Word. Two of the verses that were especially meaningful are both found in the book of Isaiah:

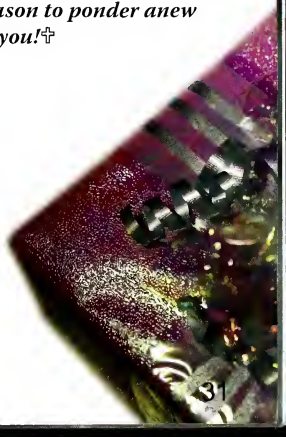
They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint — Isaiah 40:31.

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

Through adversity, this family experienced the faithfulness of God. He used this trial to draw the entire family closer to him and to cause them to focus on the most important aspects of life: loving God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving each other.

In the celebration of the season, this family will be reminded of God's love. It was love that motivated Michael to consider being a donor, but he is quick to give the credit to the Lord. "*We love because He first loved us*" – *I John 4:19*. God loved us by sending his only son as a baby to live among us and by sending his only son to the cross as our substitute. It was God's love, demonstrated through Michael's life, that made this gift possible.

May you find time this season to ponder anew his love for you!✞



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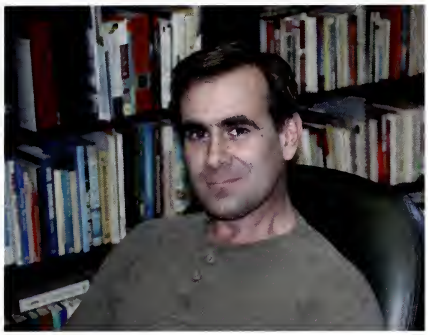
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From the Old Editor



Change is inevitable. Even rocks decay over time. Our culture expends prodigious amounts of time and money fighting this fact. Consider the recent boom in plastic surgery. And even today, a good part of our population still cannot accept the fact that Elvis got old, fat and died. They can ignore the facts, but denying change is like denying gravity – closing your eyes won't make the ground any softer.

Too much has already been written and said about churches fighting change. When a group of pastors gets together, it probably won't be long before one of them sarcastically recounts a church's dying words: "We've never done it that way here before." While stories of churches fighting change are tiresome, they persist because there's usually some truth in the observation.

As a defender of the church, let me quickly add that not all change is good. I like hymns, pews, ties and steeples, and I think they're all well-suited to worshiping the Lord. But being good and well-suited provides no immunity from change. I'm sure many excellent craftsmen built good carriages, perfectly suited to transport people to and fro. Yet, their careers became "road kill" in the wake of Henry Ford's Model T.

Sadly, there are also plenty of churches that became "road kill" in the wake of changing times. Many of these churches had good ministries, well suited for their original congregations. But their congregations changed, their neighborhoods changed, their leadership changed ... and they are gone.

The church I first pastored was in North Carolina, less than a mile from the Atlantic Ocean. Two years ago I visited the location of another Advent Christian church, in Minneapolis. The original buildings for both of these congregations still stand; only the signs have changed. Ironically, both have become Islamic

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Cover design by Tim Parolini

mosques. Like carriage builders from last century, these congregations were victims of changing times.

If there is any certain lesson to be learned from these two churches, it's that we are not promised tomorrow. Churches, like people, must savor today's blessings and capitalize on today's opportunities, because that's all we've got. If your church doesn't reach out to the new people in the neighborhood, the Muslims will. Next thing you know, your church is their mosque.

Even if Islam isn't a major threat for your church, change is. Fighting change is an exercise in futility. It's better to embrace the change and adapt. Yet, like vain, middle-aged movie stars, some churches invest huge amounts of energy to preserve the trappings of their "glory days." (With each passing day I grow more sympathetic to these middle-aged movie stars.)

For instance, how many church members have just collapsed after a grueling two months or more of preparation for the annual Christmas pageant? What was once the year's high point — and a great outreach to the community — has become yet another drain on the family's already over-committed schedule. But the church insists on preserving this "tradition" regardless of the cost.





Pictured above is the former Myrtle Grove AC Church and below the former Minneapolis AC Church.

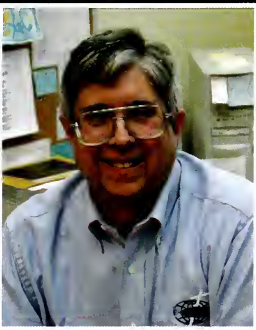
Likewise, special "revival services" used to be an effective means of reaching the unsaved ... 50 years ago. Back when television had three channels, movies were major events, and the internet lined the inside of men's swimming trunks, people could be enticed into a church by any promise of entertainment. Today, even many church members won't support special services, let alone an unbeliever. Still, many churches cling to this "tradition" as if it were the only way to win souls. (I realize that some churches still host great revival services and people are saved. I also know the embarrassment of being the host pastor for a revival and having most of my congregation missing. And, I've been guest speaker at revival services and heard an embarrassed pastor apologize for his church's poor attendance.) I can't help but wonder if these churches are still building carriages – even though Ford has opened a dealership down the street.

Your church isn't the only organization that must adapt to changing times. In order to remain effective, Advent Christian General Conference is adapting to changing times as well. Starting January 1, ACGC has made some initial steps toward adopting a new structure. The former departments of world missions, church relations, publications and services will likely be dissolved and four new departments will share these responsibilities. More than simply re-labeling departments, the new structure reassigns ministry responsibilities.

One reassignment involves moving all of the Christian education and bookstore responsibilities from the department of services to a new department of communications. My job no longer focuses on ACGC publications alone; now I will oversee all types of communication issued by all departments. Fortunately for me, I will also gain the skills and expertise of the staff of Christian education. So I am pleased to announce Dr. John Roller will be assuming most of my responsibilities as editor of the *Advent Christian Witness*. As coordinator of publications he will edit virtually everything ACGC publishes, including periodicals, electronic mailings, websites, letters, etc. It will be his privilege to share his thoughts in this space, as it has been mine for the past eight years.

I confess I'm a little apprehensive about the change. I kind of like things the way they used to be. But I'll heed my own advice and savor today's blessings and capitalize on today's opportunities. Otherwise, I might find myself surrounded by carriage builders, in the shadow of a mosque.✞

From the NEW Editor



During the past eight years many of you who attended conference and regional meetings heard me introduced with the statement, "John Roller wears a lot of hats for the Advent Christian General Conference." Well, now I've acquired a new one!

It all started when, after working one-fourth time as North American area director for urban/ethnic ministries for a year, I was asked to take on a three-fourths time responsibility as resource center coordinator. Two distinct jobs; one full-time employee.

Now, as the year 2006 dawns (Why do I feel like I'm writing a future-fiction novel?), ACGC is undergoing an interesting period of structural reorganization (Well, it's interesting to those of us who work here, anyway.). And part of my new "hat" is to explain all this to you, the *Advent Christian Witness* reader.

The department of nurture, department of operations, department of communications and department of world outreach, represent the proposed restructuring of the services provided through Advent Christian General Conference. The functions of the department of church relations, department of services, department of publications and department of world missions are to be incorporated in this new structure. Richard Russell, who was director of church relations, is now director of operations. Keith Wheaton, who was director of publications, is now director of communications. Jim Smith, who was director of services, retired last June. Harold Patterson, who was director of world missions, will soon be serving as pastor of the Advent Christian Church in Margaretville, N.Y. Tim Fox, who had been serving as pastor of the Church of New Hope, in Lewiston, Idaho, has joined us (as of January 1, 2006) as director of world outreach. And we hope we will soon be able to announce who will be joining us as director of nurture.

Where does that leave the man with all those "hats?"

Many of my former responsibilities as North American Area director for urban/ethnic ministries will be reassigned to various personnel in the departments of nurture and world outreach.

Many of my former responsibilities as resource center coordinator will be reassigned to various personnel in the departments of operations and communications.

Some of my former responsibilities will still be mine. But I have a brand-new "hat" to wear, and it'll be the only "hat" I have: "coordinator of publications." My new duties will include editing every item that is published by ACGC — checking it for everything from spelling and grammar to factual accuracy and theological correctness.

It's a daunting challenge! I'm acutely aware, now, that every criticism you (the reader) have, about anything ACGC puts out, will be directed *first* to me (before I have a chance to deflect it to anyone else!)

It also means, though, that I have the incredible privilege of being the "filter" through which all of our writings pass on their way from the writer's mind to the reader's eyes. That means I get to know what Advent Christians are thinking about in a way that, perhaps, no one else in our worldwide "family" gets to know!

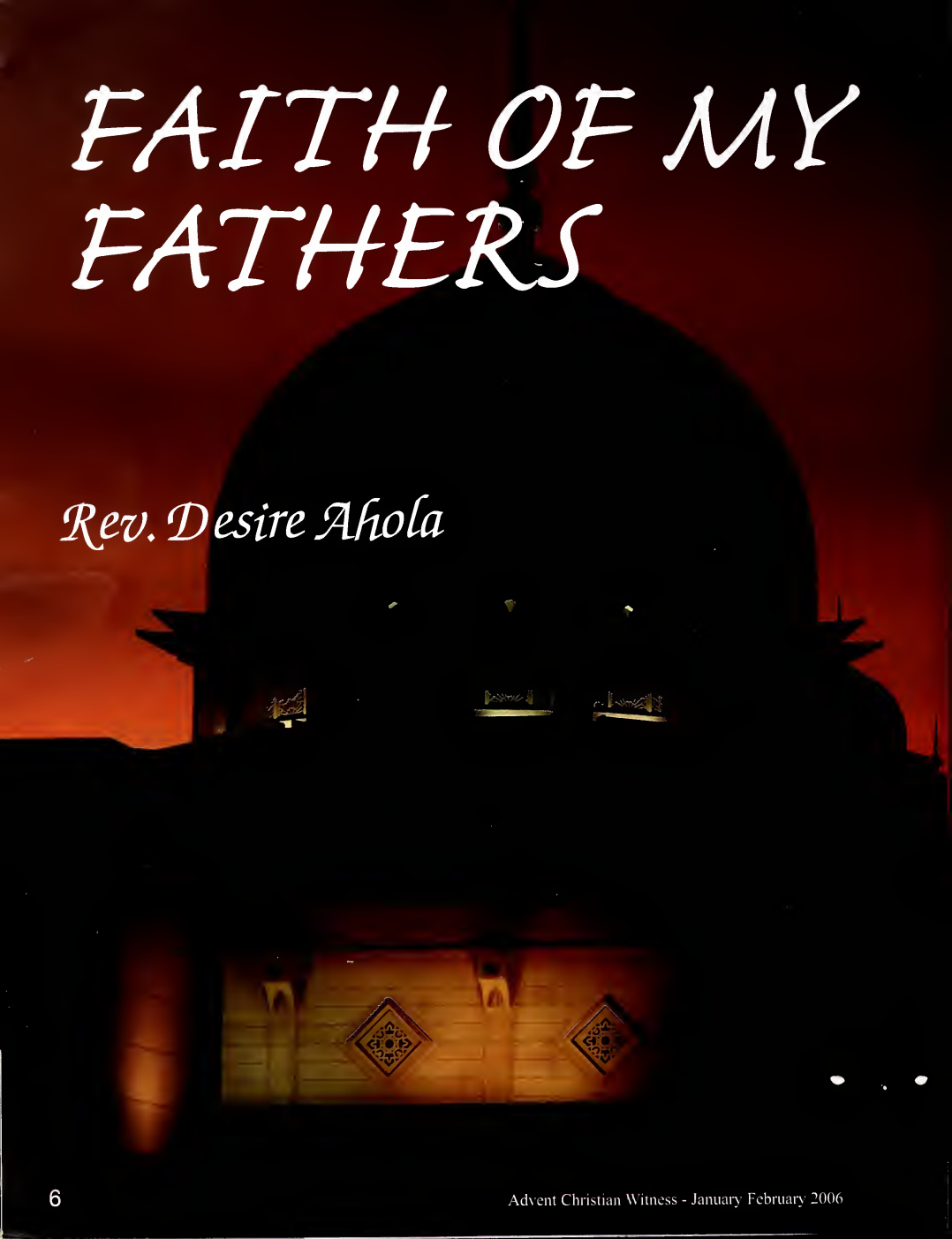
And *that* is the part that excites me, because I love the Advent Christian denomination — its members, its pastors, its churches, its conferences, its regions, its mission work, and most of all, its Lord. So please pray for me, as I pray for you, and especially as I put on my new "hat" and begin to think about the message we're communicating to the world.

Now: did I spell any of those words wrong? ... ✞

John Roller

FAITH OF MY FATHERS

Rev. Desire Ahola



When I was born, my father had only one wife — my mother. I am the third child they had. This was not a normal thing among the people of my tribe who normally were Moslem in majority. Two years later, after my birth, my father got married to his second wife. It became clear that he wanted to live like any other good Moslem or person of my tribe. In my country, polygamy is permitted. Though Islam allows up to four wives, my grandfather had seven.

In our family we were trying our best to keep on to the Islamic faith. We were praying five times a day, paying our Zakaat (poor — due), fasting the whole day in the month of Ramadan. All of my known forefathers and my father at least once in their lives made the pilgrimage to Mecca and to Madina. We were also carefully abiding to other practices of the Moslem faith.

As a child, I started so early experiencing life in a polygamy family. As my father started having many children with his two wives, things were not anymore easy for us in our family. Most of the time, I used to see how my father's behavior towards his wives was sometimes very unfair. There were instances when my father was treating his wives like slaves, forcing them to do things they were not willing to do. Whenever my father had a conflict with one of his wives, his relation and attitude towards the children of that wife will be affected as well. As a result of that, fighting, jealousy, discord, factions, envy, hatred and dissension in the family became more and more frequent. I still remember well many instances when because of a dispute between children, my mother fought physically with my father's second wife. Sometimes, my father would join in the dispute and start beating one of his wives. As a child, this situation was very stressful and frustrating for me, especially whenever my father was against my mother. I believe that other children felt the same way as I did. Living in such a house became very hard for my father. It was a very difficult situation to handle. Three years later, he thought that taking a third wife will certainly calm tensions in his house.

As my father married his third wife, things became worse in our home. ... going to consult witches ... as idolatry entered our home.

As my father married his third wife, things became worse in our home. I remember my father and all of his wives going to consult witches for some issues. The use of amulets became frequent to our family members as idolatry entered our home. Our family became just like any other Moslem family in our village.

The thing I enjoyed as a child was having everyday a group of children in our home. I never lacked play mates. For dinner, none of the children could be capricious. We eat in groups and each one had to make sure when eating to be fast enough so that others do not eat all the food as he remains hungry. Looking at us was really funny. I enjoyed the month of Ramadan because there was always a lot of food in our home. We eat early in the morning and late in the evening. Most of the time, we had visitors in our home during the evening meal time. Having many brethren and relatives was always a privilege. In school, hardly could one be attacked by other children. Those children who were not from a large family usually received beatings on their way to school and on their way back home. They were not allowed to do any mistake. The treatment was more severe for Christian children. They were being used as our slaves to carry our heavy school bags. Some of them were compelled to give us their meals or money to buy candies at break time. During my first year in school I enjoyed those things as my relatives were doing that to other children.

When I was 8 years old, I realized that most of my male classmates were circumcised just as I was. But there was one and only one of my male classmate who was not circumcised. At that age, it was quite shameful in our community for a boy not to be circumcised. People used to make great fun of that boy named Serge. In our class, pupils changed his name from Serge to be calling him Singe which means "monkey." They said only monkeys are not circumcised while every normal male human being is circumcised. Serge was most of the time frustrated. He cried almost each morning he was coming to school. He was the first-born from a monogamy family and had nobody to defend him

on his way to school and back home. I felt really sorry for him each time people mistreated him. Because of the sympathy I had for Serge, I became his best friend.

One day, Serge came to play with me in my home. As we were playing, other boys came and joined us. We were playing soccer. Serge committed a technical foul on one player of the opposite team. Since the boy was older than Serge, he became very angry at Serge and called him "monkey." Other boys started laughing at Serge who then became ashamed and started crying. Since my father was the school headmaster and we were playing in my home, I reported to him what people were doing to my friend Serge. My father was aware of all what people were doing to Serge. He said to me that he had a talk with Serge's parents and he advised them to circumcised him. Serge's father was against circumcision and did not accept to circumcise his son.

I was really upset at Serge's parents and could not understand why they did not want to circumcise their son. I told the story to my mother who gave me some of the key answer. Serge's parents were Christians. My mother said to me that though our tradition and religion allowed circumcision, Christians were not compelled to circumcise their children (Deuteronomy. 30:6; Acts 21: 22; Galatians 6:12-15). I understood that circumcision was instituted by God for the Jew. I was not a Jew, neither were my classmates Jews. Why were we then circumcised? This question led me to deep inquiry about the faith of my forefathers. For so many years I could not find the answer. Later on, my father, his wives and all we children were converted to the Presbyterian church. Though my father became a Christian, he retained all his wives and he continued to circumcise my younger brothers. As a Christian, I became more confused because I remembered that Serge's parents were also Christians but they refused to circumcised Serge.

Circumcision and polygamy became my first challenge in order for me to understand my beliefs. I really decided to know more about Islam and the reason why my parents abandoned it to become Christians. As I asked my father, he did not have much to tell me about his conviction to become a Moslem. He became a Moslem because my grand father was a Moslem. Dr. Thomas S. Warren II says "People believe things largely because somebody they respect like parent or teacher told them. ... that one's theology has been shaped more by family, friends and false teaching than the Bible is a hard pill to swallow. ... " My father started having doubt in Islam in 1967 when the Arab states joined and attacked the State of Israel. The conversion of my father from Islam to Christianity was based on his deep inquiry of the writings of Muhammad that presented Islam as hateful, murderous and intolerant towards Christians, Jews and all people not accepting Islam. Here are just three of these verses my father presented to me.

My father started having doubt in Islam in 1967 when the Arab states joined and attacked the State of Israel.

"But when the sacred months elapse, then fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them and seize them, besiege them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war). But if they repent and establish regular prayers, and practice regular charity, then open the way for them for Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" (Surah 9:5)

"0 ye who believe! Truly the pagans are unclean, so let them not approach the sacred Mosque after this year, and if ye fear poverty, soon will Allah enrich you (if He wills) out of His bounty for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise ... fight against the people of the Book ..." (Surah 9:28-29).

"And fight in the way of Allah, with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits. Drive them out from where they drove you out; for persecution is severer than slaughter and fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah (alone) ... Vide 190 to 193:2, 8:60

My father told me the story of how our forefathers became Moslems. He said to me that based on the teachings of Muhammad the founder of Islam the following invasions were earned out:

1. The Moslem Caliphate Umar Ibn al-Khat-

tab send Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas to invade Persia. Dr. Abu Zayd, a Moslem scholar, narrates to us the incident as he says, "Sa'd sent some of his followers (among them the Mu'man Ibn Maqrin to Yazdagird, one of the Persian generals) who asked him, 'What enticed you and brought you to invade us?' (Ibn Maqrin) said to him, 'Choose for yourself; either Islam, the poll-tax or the sword.' The Persian general became very angry and said to him, 'Had it not been (the custom that messengers should not be killed), I would have killed you. Go; you have nothing to do with me.' Ibn Khaldun, another Moslem scholar, confirms this incident and he says, 'Rustan, the Persian general, said to one of Sa'd's messengers, "you were poor and we used to provide you with plenty of food. Why do you invade us now?"' 'Sa' d seized (after the battle of Qadisiyya) all that was in the treasury of Khusro of money and treasure. It was so plentiful that each Arab horseman received 12,000 dirham.'

2. "Abu 'Ubayda invaded Damascus. He marched towards Damascus and besieged it for seventy nights. He cut off all supplies while its inhabitants were pleading for help and assistance. Then the khalid attacked the city and massacred thousands of people. They were forced to ask for peace treaty. Abu 'Ubayda turned over the ruler of Damascus to Yazid and ordered him to invade the neighboring (cities). He attacked Sidon, Beirut, and others.

3. Umru Ibn al- as invaded Jerusalem. He besieged it for four months. Then its Christian inhabitants agreed to pay the poll-tax and to surrender to Umar Ibn alkhattab, the Moslem caliph. 'Umar made a trip to Jerusalem and laid the foundation of the mosque. With that, the conquest of Syria was accomplished, but as the pestilence (plague) raged, many of the high-ranking generals of the Islamic army died, among them Abu Ubayda, Yazid and Sharabbil.

4. "Umru invaded Egypt. He said that 'Egypt's abundance and yields are plentiful. The conquest of Egypt would gain for the Muslims a foothold in Syria and make it easier for them to invade Africa to spread Islam.' He said to the messengers of the governor of Egypt, 'There is nothing between us and you except three things: a) Embrace Islam, become our brethren and you will have what we have and you will be subjected to what we are subjected (in this case they will pay alms (money) to the treasury of the state). b) If you refuse that, you are obligated to pay tribute with humiliation. c) War. The governor of Egypt attempted to offer them something different, but they rejected it. At last, after a fight, he accepted the second condition, namely to pay tribute and to be subjugated to Islamic rule. The Moslem entered Egypt.' Later, they spread Islam in other parts of Africa but the people of Africa broke the pledge because that pledge was imposed on them by force in lieu of death. Yet Muslim killed thousands of Africans.

> My forefathers became Moslems not by conviction, but by compulsion of faith. They never found logic or reason and truth in the teachings of Muhammad.

5. "In year 33 of the Hajira (Moslem Calendar) the second invasion of Africa was accomplished. 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan ordered 'Abdalla Ibn Sa'd to invade Africa.' (He told him) 'If you conquer it take 1/25 of its booty.' 'Abdalla Ibn Sa'd marched towards it at the head of an army of 20,000 soldiers. He conquered it and killed multitudes of people from among its inhabitants until the remnant were converted to Islam and became subject to the Arabs.'"

What remains the true fact is that circumcision and polygamy were accepted by my forefathers a long time before the Islamic conquests of Africa. It was the mark that my forefathers have accepted the Jewish faith and abided by the Law of Moses. With the coming of the Messiah, most of the Africans accepted Christianity whereas others remain animists. When Christianity entered Africa, it was not compulsory. "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). When the African, Ethio-

pian eunuch expressed his desire to be baptized, Philip told him "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (Acts 8:37). This biblical text shows me that there had never been compulsion with the Christian faith. It is worth it to mention that the first Christian church was built in Africa.

How unfortunate were my forefathers. They were invaded by the Arabs who killed thousands of them, divided the booty, and forced the remnant to embrace Islam. It is quite clear to me why my father had to change from the Islamic faith that was imposed to my forefathers to become Christian. My forefathers became Moslems not by conviction, but by compulsion of faith. They never found logic or reason and truth in the teachings of Muhammad.

Are the black Africans the only unfortunate people? The clear answer is no! The people of Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya, all the Arab tribes, Spain, China, India, Cyprus and the Kurds, all are unfortunate peoples and nations who became victims of Islamic Law which detests human rights.

Christianity appears to be the only true practical religion of equality, liberty, and fraternity. A religion whereby the founder died to give freedom to his followers.

Islam as defined in the Quran of Muhammad means submission to the Supreme Being, and Compliance with his laws. Islam is presented as the practical religion of equality, liberty, and fraternity. Yet Islam does not prohibit slavery. Islam encourages Moslems to keep slaves — no liberation. Muhammad, "the prophet" of freedom and equality had many male and female slaves. He used to buy and sell them, but he purchased (more slaves) than he sold. He (once) sold one black slave for two. The name of that slave was Jacob al-Mudbir. Jacob is not an African name but Jewish. This shows to me that this black African was one of the blacks who accepted the Jewish faith and was surely circumcised. In Islam, the testimony of the slave is not admissible and there is no punishment for one who makes false accusation against slaves.

Talking about Muhammad the founder of Islam, he was an illiterate young man who was engaged by a wealthy widow — merchant, Khadiija to look after her mercantile business, with result that she, fifteen years older than Muhammad, married Muhammad at the age of 25. Their marriage life lasted 25 years. Muhammad in the Quran presents himself as an excellent model of conduct for anyone whose hope is in Allah (God) and the Final Day. Muhammad's excellent ethics model allows mutual divorce, remarriage, and accepts them as natural and necessary provisions of the institution of marriage. Muhammad also allows polygamy with up to four wives at the same time.

A good Moslem must be an imitator of Muhammad, and a good Christian must be an imitator of Jesus Christ. During my life as a Moslem and from what I know now and believe about Christianity, I see a great difference between Islam and Christianity, between Muhammad and Jesus Christ. There are just a few things I needed to consider to decide whether my father was right to abandon the Islamic faith imposed to our fathers for him to become a Christian; Jesus Christ led no war to spread the Christian faith, to divide the booty and to capture women to enslave them for himself and for his followers. Jesus Christ did not order his followers to do so. Jesus Christ order Peter to sheath his sword when he unsheathed it and struck the servant of the Jewish high priest when Christ' s enemies hastened to arrest him. Jesus Christ' s successors and disciples did not wage wars and march into battle to take poll-taxes and to spread Christianity.

Jesus Christ said: "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi' (master); for one is your Teacher (master), the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matt. 23:8). "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased (humbled); and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

Paul, the follower of Jesus Christ, met a slave called Onesimus who ran away from his master, Philemon. Onesimus met the apostle Paul in Rome and was converted to Christianity not compulsory but by conviction. Paul send him back to Philemon with a very impressive letter stating: "I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart. Receive him ... no longer as a slave but ... as a beloved brother, ... both in flesh and in the Lord" (Philemon 12-21).

When I had little knowledge about the history of the crusades that took place from 1096 till the early 13th Century to regain Jerusalem from Arab and Turkish Moslems, I thought that the crusades were wars Christians had against the Moslems. But thank God and the Lord Jesus Christ who convinced me that the crusades were wars between Europe and the Islamic and Turkish rulers. These wars were political wars leaded by kings, emperors and the political function of the Vatican State. Pope Urban II failed because as a Christian, he had no mandate from the Lord Jesus Christ to carry on such a war.

From all these above, without entering into deep debates, Christianity appears to be the only true practical religion of equality, liberty, and fraternity. A religion whereby the founder died to give freedom to his followers.

Since we became Christians, fighting, jealousy, discord, factions, envy, hatred and dissension went out of our family. It has been a great privilege for me to accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior and fully give myself for his service. I am proud to proclaim the great commandment and to fulfill the great commission. Jesus Christ my Savior is the Son of God, he was crucified because of my sins, he died for me and he resurrected. He is truly alive. He is coming back soon to take all those who believe in him. This I believe and I wait that Day.✞



Rev. Desire Ahola is a native of the Ivory Coast and a gifted church planter. He is the pastor of the church he planted in Zagreb, Croatia. Previously, he had planted churches in Chad. God has blessed his ministry with many converts from various nations in Eastern Europe. As a result of his ministry, we now have Advent Christian works started in Bucharest, Romania and Kiev, Ukraine. He has been very effective in ministering to college-age young adults. His wife, Martina, is a native of Croatia.

Islam







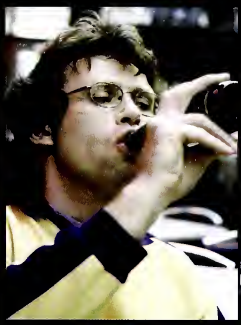








Christianity













Muslim Conceptions of Christian Morals : A Personal Perspective

By Penny Vann

Statistics from the year 2000 suggest that just over one out of every six people on earth is Muslim. They can be found not only in places like the Philippines but also in Lake City, Florida. In recent years the church has been challenged to reach them for Christ. In order to reach them with the gospel we must understand their definition of a Christian. This article will focus on what Muslims have shared with us — or others close to us — about what Christianity is to them. The article will then consider how we might clarify any misunderstanding.

The concept that Christianity was misunderstood was brought home to us a few years ago on Mindinao, where our Muslim landlord spent time telling us that "if, as Christians believe, there were three gods, there would be disorder because they would fight. So, there can only be one God." She had a distorted view of what we call the trinity; therefore she defined Christians as being polytheists.

A Muslim's misunderstanding of Christianity is not only found in the area of theology, but also in the area of Christian ethics. We learned this at a meeting where we listened to a prominent Filipino missionary to Muslims. He was talking about some of the obstacles of reaching Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What surprised us was an obstacle he mentioned, Christian morals. He said that "according to some Muslims, to become a Christian is to become an idol worshiper, pork eater, alcohol drinker. They are people who do all these things, plus they commit all kinds of blatant social sins. They see Islam as a religion of personal discipline and Christianity as a rejection of that discipline."

There is plenty of empirical evidence for this assumption in the Philippines as well as the U.S. The Philippines declares that it is the only Christian nation in Asia. Yet, the country has a terrible track record of corruption and violence. In the cities, the nightclubs advertise the need for GRO "hospitality girls." Hotels promise privacy and low, three-hour rates. One advertised right outside our house, offering three hours for three dollars. Philip Parshal, in *The cross and the crescent: Reflections on Christian-Muslim spirituality* (Tyndale House, 1989) compares the quiet, contemplative atmosphere of the Mosque with his visit to a Cathedral where people sold religious relics, and women hounded him to buy lottery tickets at the door. I

visited one Cathedral that had signs posted saying NO DATING. I have also been to worship services where unmarried couples snuggled in the pews. This must confound Muslims, as men and women worship separately in mosques.

The U.S claims to be founded on Christian values, yet our movies and TV shows often show immodest, loose girls and people profaning God's name. So, "Christian America" is seen as exporting vice to the rest of the world. This prejudice was witnessed by students of the Bible College. Two female students were talking to a Muslim female teenager who said, "I wish I could be a Christian so that I could be a "liberated" girl." They pressed her to explain and she replied, "You get to dress however you want in fashionable clothes — even wearing shorts —and you can date and kiss any boy you want to." Obviously this girl does not have the proper perspective on what it means to be a Christian. Her definition comes, not from theological or Biblical sources, but from what she sees.

The last incidence I would like to bring up is when a Muslim acquaintance shared with me that "Islam makes everyone equal, for when Christians go to church they dress in expensive clothes so the poor cannot go. But, in Islam we need no expensive clothes so everyone is welcome and equal." I was amazed at the statement because in the Philippines people dress up less for church than here in the U.S. However, in this article I am dealing with perceptions, and this is hers. A recent article by Warren Larson in the January, 2005 *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* suggests African Americans are turning to Islam because there is discrimination in the churches and not true unity.

If we are going to reach Muslims for Christ, the following challenges need to be considered:

Our first challenge: is their definition of Christians and Christianity true? Are we idol-worshippers, drunkards, immodest and loose? Are we prejudiced towards others we call brothers in Christ? Obviously, biblically the church is not those things, but is this what we are portraying to the world? If it is, then we must make some major corrections.

Our second challenge: we must walk our talk. We must endeavor to let scripture dictate our everyday life. This includes what we wear, what movies we see, our family life and our political voice.

Our third challenge: we must be sensitive to their culture. I am not talking about wearing a veil but rather dressing modestly. We can show Christ's love to them by inviting them to our home or out for coffee and not having pork or alcohol but discussing theological differences as well. For an even better understanding of a Muslim's view of Christianity, I encourage you to seek them out.✞

Reference List

1. Parshall, Phil. 1989. *The cross and the crescent: Reflections on Christian-Muslim spirituality.* Wheaton, Ill. Tyndale House.
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Penny Vann, her husband, Jeff, and their two daughters are AC missionaries in the Philippines.

The 'Five Pillars' of Islam

The foundation of Muslim life:

Faith or belief in the Oneness of God and the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad;
Establishment of the daily prayers;
Concern for and almsgiving to the needy;
Self-purification through fasting; and
The pilgrimage to Makkah for those who are able.

Iman or Faith - "There is none worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is the messenger of God." This declaration of faith is called the Shahadah, a simple formula that all the faithful pronounce. The significance of this declaration is the belief that the only purpose of life is to serve and obey God, and this is achieved through the teachings and practices of the Last Prophet, Muhammad.

Salah or Prayer - is the name for the obligatory prayers that are performed five times a day, and are a direct link between the worshipper and God. There is no hierarchical authority in Islam and there are no priests. Prayers are said at dawn, mid-day, late-afternoon, sunset and nightfall. These five prescribed prayers contain verses from the Qur'an, and are said in Arabic.

A translation of the **Adan or Call to Prayer** is: God is Great. God is Great. God is Great. God is Great. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God. I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God. I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to success! Come to success! God is Great! God is Great! There is none worthy of worship except God.

Zakah - The financial obligation upon Muslims - An important principle of Islam is that everything belongs to God, and that wealth is, therefore, held by human beings in trust. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need and for the society in general.

Each Muslim calculates his or her own zakah individually. This involves the annual payment of a fortieth of one's capital, excluding such items as primary residence, car and professional tools.

An individual may also give as much as he or she pleases, and does so preferably in secret. Although this word can be translated as "voluntary charity" it has a wider meaning. The Prophet said, "Even meeting your brother with a cheerful face is an act of charity." The Prophet also said: "Charity is a necessity for every Muslim." He was asked: "What if a person has nothing?" The Prophet replied: "He should work with his own hands for his benefit and then give something out of such earnings in charity." The Companions of the Prophet asked: "What if he is not able to work?" The Prophet said: "He should help the poor and needy." The Companions further asked: "What if he cannot do even that?" The Prophet said: "He should urge others to do good." The Companions said: "What if he lacks that also?" The Prophet said: "He should check himself from doing evil. That is also an act of charity."

Sawm or Fasting - Every year in the month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sundown. Although fasting is beneficial to health, it is mainly a method of self-purification and self-restraint. By cutting oneself from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person focuses on his or her purpose in life by constantly being aware of the presence of God. God states in the Qur'an: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint." (Qur'an 2:183)

Hajj or Pilgrimage - The pilgrimage to Makkah (the hajj) is an obligation only for those who are physically and financially able to do so. The annual hajj begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic year (which is lunar, not solar, so that hajj and Ramadan fall sometimes in summer, sometimes in winter). Pilgrims wear special clothes: simple garments that strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God. The rites of the hajj, which are of Abrahamic origin, include going around the Ka'bah seven times, and going seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa as did Hagar (Hajir, Abraham's wife) during her search for water. The pilgrims later stand together on the wide plains of 'Arafat (a large expanse of desert outside Makkah) and join in prayer for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought as a preview of the Day of Judgment. The close of the hajj is marked by a festival, the 'Id al Adha, which is celebrated with prayers and the exchange of gifts in Muslim communities everywhere.✞

Acknowledgement: The text is based from the Poster Exhibit of Discover Islam. compiled by Ishaq Zahid



Overcoming the crisis-driven church

by Dr. William H. Chadwick

If there were a word that you could use to describe the "normal" operating atmosphere of your church what would it be? "Oh that's easy," replied the church lay-leader, "The word I would use is-'Crisis.'"

OUR STRUGGLE

Confronting crisis in this world is nothing new. Jesus' entire ministry seemed steeped in events and confrontations that could easily be categorized as crisis situations. Crisis — twenty-two biblical accounts of injured people begging him for divine healing of both body and soul; Crisis — Jewish bible scholars arguing points of the law, hoping for entrapment with punitive consequences; Crisis — disgruntled followers complaining about Jesus' methodology and goals; Crisis — political enemies plotting his demise. Jesus warned his disciples that crisis would be the motis operandi for their ministries when he said, *"In this world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, for I have over-come this world."*

The Epistles of the Apostle Paul fair no better. His staunch confrontational words addressed to troublemakers in the churches, his powerful theological teachings against heresy, his passionate pleads for unity, reflect the apostle's familiarity with battling crisis. So closely are crisis associated with the work of the Gospel that the apostle Peter wrote, *"Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you, But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed"* (1 Peter 4:12f).

In the early church, engaging in crisis was a sign of validation — a clear indicator that you were serving the will of God. Martyrdom became a badge of honor that was so highly valued that Paul used it as an example to elevate the value of love when he wrote; "If I give my body to be burned, but have not love ..." (1 Corinthians 13). St. Augustine wrote that the "Blood of the Martyrs, was the seed of the

church," emphasizing again that crisis was part of our faith, and that God used such events for his glory.

Indeed, with Satan as our adversary, we would be pretty naive to think that we would not be frequently confronted with crisis situations. As Peter warns, *"Be self-controlled, and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"* (Peter 5:8). So serious is the battle, so common the encounter with hostile forces that, in Ephesians, Paul writes one of the most graphic and eloquent passages in the scriptures to describe our conflict with the enemy when he pens, *"Put on the full armor of God, so when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground ..."* (Eph. 6:13).



ARROWS IN THE BACK

"I do not mind taking arrows in my chest as I lead the church into battle — that is part of my calling" said the Pastor. "But the arrows in my back from individuals of small character within the church — those are the arrows that kill you."

But this article is not about noble battles of advancing the kingdom of God against the gates of Hades. No, *this article is about ignoble battles* that are fought in the confines of the church. The "Crisis-Driven Church" is a church where internal conflict and crisis have become the **new operating standard** of the church. In this mode the church's day-to-day mission is *inwardly* focused on preservation and maintenance, as opposed to the outwardly focused business of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 28:19).

For the "Crisis-Driven Church," ***crisis management*** is the working administrative model. This model expends the church's energy addressing the never-ending fires of urgent issues that overwhelm church leadership teams. It is a disabilitating management style that leaves no room for productive planning, vision-casting or renewal. It is an exhausting process because each issue is measured subjectively, (as opposed to objectively), and the potential for offended parties and inter-church conflict is unreasonably high. It is also the number-one style of management for most churches fewer than 80 people, because it is a style that requires the highly-valued direct personal interaction with the pastor.

WHY DO PASTORS OR CHURCHES ENGAGE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT?

Pastors engage in crisis management on a number of different levels. Some pastors are forced into this dysfunctional management scheme. Many small churches maintain control of the church by using crisis to direct the attention and energy of the ministry, or to eliminate leadership they no longer support. Pastors who find themselves in these settings often simply try to

survive by oiling squeaky wheels and patching the dam wherever they see a leak. Typically the best they will produce from their investment of time is some short-term ministry patches, and a three-year tenure. Often their departure is under duress and damaging to one or both parties.

On another level some pastors are enablers of crisis management because they find that this style energizes them. Pastors with strong personalities and high fix-it meters, thrive on the "fire house" atmosphere of the "crisis-driven church." When the alarm goes off, they slide down the pole and race to the scene to rescue the distressed and receive the love and admiration of the crowds. Crashing into burning buildings, wearing the badge of a hero, goes a long way to filling the tremendous void in self-esteem many of the clergy confront. At this level of play they are needed and inexpendable.

Rarely do "crisis-driven churches" attract anything other than the already saved, disenfranchised and wounded people

At a third level, crisis management is an easy way to run a church. There is no planning required as each event determines the course of the day. Crisis helps to define preaching topics/ministry venues/and mission. There can be periods of unregulated time before the storm, allowing personal activities to be enjoyed. Finally, busyness is one by-product of racing from crisis to crisis that is perceived by the flock as productive, granting creditability to the pastor's job.

People in the church like crisis management because it demands a one-on-one touch from the pastor. A person's needs become very powerful because they become the all-consuming criteria for ministry success. Failure to meet a person's needs is a failure to pastor effectively. This power over important people and ministry priorities can become intoxicating, and demanding attention, addictive.

Crisis management also is a way for church veterans to control the church. As mentioned before, the agenda is set by the needs of the congregation or an individual on any given day. By producing "crisis" resources that are not addressing a "crisis," they become diversions from other programs or projects. "We need that money for the boiler ... we can't do 40 Days," or "Pastor could you visit my aunt who is dying in the nursing home ... you will be too busy for starting up small groups." Although dysfunctional and circumventing, crisis management is a time-honored traditional way to manipulate a church's mission.

"CRISIS-DRIVEN CHURCHES" ARE KILLING THE "KINGDOM"

Rarely do "crisis-driven churches" attract anything other than the already saved, disenfranchised and wounded people. They commonly experience high pastoral turnover rates, loss of evangelical impact, declining growth patterns, declining revenue, loss of vision and purpose and dissention in the ranks at all levels. The end result of this management method is that it is killing the local church in America and in our denomination.

> Leith Anderson writes; "Eighty-five percent of America's Protestant churches are either stagnating or dying. Many of the sincere and committed Christians who still faithfully fill the family pews in these churches hold on to the nostalgic hope that tomorrow will be yesterday. Others desperately want their churches to catch up with the times and meet the challenges of the present generation, but they don't know how. And still others doggedly fight the inevitable changes for the sake of tra-

ditions that would be better abandoned. ... What is happening to our churches and our organizations? And what can we do about it? Many good people desperately want to know" (Dying for Change p.10).

HOW CAN A CHURCH DISCOVER IF THEY ARE A "CRISIS-DRIVEN CHURCH?"

The answer is simple. Churches need to do a ***self-evaluation***. This evaluation, however, will differ greatly from the ones that churches usually use to determine the health of the organization (attendance and income). In this examination we will focus on the tell-tale signs that are characteristics of a "crisis-driven church."

There are ***seven warning signs of a "crisis-driven church."*** If your church regularly engages in three or more of these characteristics, then you must consider the fact that your church-management style is unhealthy and in need of change.

THE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A "CRISIS DRIVEN CHURCH:"

1. ***Low or no conversions experienced annually:*** This is a healthy indicator of whether your ministry is inwardly or outwardly focused. It also measures your compliance with the Great Commission, and your ability to focus on the number-one charge to any church body — conversion growth.
2. ***Lack of planning, lack of vision:*** Churches that are consumed with the tyranny of the urgent, rarely spend time looking to God for plans for the future. If your church never has board-planning retreats, staff-planning days, or a clear vision for the ministry, then you will have a reactive ministry profile. Typically a crisis-driven church considers spending time planning a waste of time that would have been better spent "doing." In these environments the tail wags the dog, and effective ministry is rarely achieved.
3. ***High Leadership Turnover Rate:*** The standard term for a pastor in a healthy church is seven years. The most dynamic years of leadership effectiveness occur in years: five to seven, 14 to 17, and 21 and up. If your church fails to reach these longevity milestones, then you are failing to maximize your leaderships potential, perhaps because of the burnout rate associated with crisis-management systems.
4. ***Subversive Discord:*** Tongues, tales, and triangles; churches that have dysfunctional leadership and relational systems tend to undermine effective ministry by consuming the pastor and staff's energy trying to put out fires. "Crisis-driven churches" often are plagued with internal, "issues," such as ghost grievances and division.
5. ***Resistance to Change:*** (We have never done it that way before.) Even though crisis management is dysfunctional, it is a *known* entity, and, by virtue of that fact, it can become "safe." Churches that are addicted to this management style see change as a major threat. Anything that might remove the familiar, ability to control, self-focus, or other perceived benefits of a crisis-driven atmosphere will be harshly rejected. Fear forces this church into maintaining a bad ministry rather than facing the potential of losing the known, "comfort zone."
6. ***Lack of Corporate Involvement:*** A "crisis-driven church" will trend away from discipleship, training, team mentalities, and body involvement. They typically experience "Lone Ranger" leadership styles whereby one person runs the program and controls all aspects of the ministry. This unfortunately lends itself to large subjective ownership issues, rejection of new personnel, huge personal hurt potential, and burnout.
7. ***Dying:*** Decline often follows a church that is in a perpetual state of crisis. People are not attracted to the seven characteristics that mark a "crisis-driven church." Churches that are dying must

seriously consider if their management style has led to their demise.

IS THERE HOPE?

The American Heritage Dictionary defines a crisis as, "A crucial point in the course of anything; ***a turning point***." In Chinese, two characters are pressed together in their written language to create the word for crisis. The first character represents disaster, and the second, opportunity.

The church is the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world today. Jesus fought for the church, loved the church, and died for the church. It would strike me as unbelievable that churches in need of his help were beyond the reach of his hand. The question, as always when one is talking about the things of faith, is, do you trust him? Can you let go and let God? Will you allow him to be the head of your church, or will you continue to grasp the reigns?

Change is hard, but for our denomination, not to change is no longer an option. Gone are the glory days; gone too, are the coasting days, and hard upon us are the days of decline. We can be retooled for effective ministry, or we can choose to die, and some other movement will take our place. The decision is ours, and the ultimate response lies in our desire to be proactive or passive. Remember: not to make a decision *is* a decision.

Join us in *The Witness* as in the months ahead we will feature ways to overcome the seven characteristics of a *Crisis-Driven Church*.✞

Dr. William H. Chadwick is serving as pastor of the Stroudwater Christian Church (AC) in Portland, Maine





Advent Christian
General Conference
President
Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Making the World Think!

I have a friend named Murray. He's been at his church for 27 years as pastor. To put it mildly, he's a nut! I mean that in the most respectful way. A few years ago, I took him to Israel and I wondered sometimes if we were going to get out of there alive. For example, Murray was asked to ride a camel for a small donation. He resisted at first but eventually decided to give it a try. Everything was going well until they tried to put a turban on his head. In reaction, you could hear Murray declare in a loud voice, "I can't do that, I'm no Palestinian!" You can imagine how that comment sent us scurrying for a crevice in the wall. In the end, Murray climbed aboard the camel and his "yee ha" cheer could be heard across the city as he rode that camel like a cowboy in a rodeo.

Murray is just one member of a special group of men in my life. For the past 10 years I have met twice a month with a group of pastors for fellowship and food. It's a time when we talk, laugh, cry and encourage each other in any way that we can. You might not recognize us as pastors if you saw us because our group is an interesting group. Some are dressed in shorts while others are dressed more formally. But it doesn't matter. Some are quiet and some are much more vocal. Yet, over the years I have seen the quiet ones open up and the louder ones tone it down as we have come to know and love each other. Quite honestly, our relationship has matured to the point that I would have to think about it for a minute before I could tell you what denomination each man represents.

As an Advent Christian I am accepted in this group. They don't strike me off their list because I hold to some theological beliefs that differ from theirs. In fact, over the years we have talked very openly about the nature of man and other biblical teachings in a way that is constructive. One reason for this is that they respect me, and the reason they respect me is that we have been in relationship with each other for many years. They know that I am not a quack (well, maybe I am a quack), but they love me anyway. They can look past

our differences and be committed to our relationship because we all love Jesus.

Recently I met a man in the store who was the pastor of the Mount Zion Church of God on Normandy Blvd. (not too far from our church). He was helping Janice, the store owner. As we talked, I suggested that he come and be a part of our group. He told me that he wished he had known about our group 10 years ago when he first came to his church. At that time, he went around asking area pastors if they would like to get together regularly for fellowship and prayer. Many said that they would get back with him, but no one ever called. He stated very clearly that he needed our kind of group. As our discussion continued, we ended up once again reacting in amazement at how little the church acts like the church. We wondered how long we are going to keep allowing our differences and busy schedules to keep us apart.

About that time Steve walked into the store and entered our conversation. He's a great guy, but he, too, has been through the gauntlet when it comes to struggles in life in ministry. A few years ago, he went away on vacation and when he returned the church informed him that he had been dismissed from his position as pastor. For quite awhile he was devastated and discouraged until he found our group. He is now laughing and filled with joy again as he sees what God is doing in his life. His office is in the bookstore and he uses the computers in the store to do his research. I'll never forget what he asked, "Why don't we build a mall church? You know, with a food court and a bookstore in the center and have each corridor lead to our particular church. Yours down there and mine down here?" His words (in jest) suggested that that's about the only way we could be together. I listened, but I thought to myself, "Is that what we've come to?"

Later on in the evening I began to think about what Steve had said earlier. I began to think about the reasons our group was together and what it was that bound us to each other. It quickly became clear to me that we had bonded together so well because we all love Jesus and that was more important than whether or not the other guy believed the way I did about a particular subject. Sometimes I think that Advent Christians don't want anything to do with other people unless they believe in Conditional Immortality.

Interestingly, Jesus said that the world would know that we are his disciples by the way we love each other. ... I wonder, "What does the world think?"

Maybe we could learn a lesson from this. Maybe we should ask the Lord to give us a new heart that loves and reaches out to people because that's what Jesus would do and not because they think a particular way. Maybe we should ask the Lord to show us how we really are when it comes to living our lives for him with other people, especially when they differ from us.

Today I heard a clip on the radio from an NFL player stating, "I ain't no divisive person." This was after he declared the day before that his quarterback, not his coach, was the reason for the team's failure this year. When confronted about his verbal attack, he gave a weak and flippant apology about what he had done. Too late! The damage had been done. A football team can't tolerate this kind of behavior from members of the team. They are a team, and they need to work together.

The church is a team too! Not just Advent Christians, but every one. Yes, we will disagree on certain matters, but we must be diligent in loving the lost like Jesus did. Perhaps we could learn how to do that better if we start loving each other first. Interestingly, Jesus said that the world would know that we are his disciples by the way we love each other (John 13:35). I wonder, "What does the world think?"✞

Scholarships Available to Advent Christian Students

Aurora University

With strong roots in the Advent Christian Church, Aurora University has several scholarships for Advent Christian students or for individuals who want to pursue a career in Advent Christian ministries, Christian service and/or social services. The scholarships have been made possible by generous gifts of friends and alumni, many of whom are Advent Christians. The total amount awarded in 2005-2006 was $34,313.

Aurora University traces its origins to the 1893 founding of a seminary in the small town of Mendota, IL. Though established initially to prepare graduates for ministry, the institution soon adopted a broader mission and moved to a new campus on the western edge of the nearby community of Aurora. With this change came a different name and a growing enrollment. When World War II ended, the campus population swelled again as veterans enrolled in the college's innovative evening degree program. The 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion of curricular offerings in a number of professional fields and the awarding of advanced degrees in selected disciplines. These changes culminated in the 1985 decision to re-christen the institution Aurora University.

Today, Aurora University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association to award degrees at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels. The institution enrolls approximately 4,000 degree-seeking students a year on its Illinois and Wisconsin campuses. AU offers its undergraduates a wide range of on and off-campus learning experiences. Students participate in more than 40 musical, literary, religious, social and service organizations and play actives roles in campus governance. The university also fields sixteen NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletic teams.

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For enrollment information, contact AU's Office of Admission and Financial Aid at 800-742-5281, 630-844-5533 or admission@aurora.edu.

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NOTE: Please attach a brief paragraph outlining why you feel these scholarship funds should be awarded to you.

Your completed application may be returned to the Admission and Financial Aid Office or faxed to 630-844-5535. Applications are also available by e-mail. Contact persons and their e-mail addresses are:

Jason Harmon: jharmon@aurora.edu Phone: 630-844-5293
Heather Gutierrez: hgutierr@aurora.edu Phone: 630-844-5448

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner

Jeremiah 29:11 is a favorite of many Christians:

> ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."***

I've seen it printed in a Christian greeting card, penned into personal letters, and spoken with assurance to mixed congregations and individuals, irrespective of their spiritual condition. It certainly is a wonderful promise. But is God really planning a bright future for *everyone*? Let's look at the context.

Verse 11 was part of a letter which Jeremiah the prophet wrote to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. (The full letter is recorded in 29:4-23.) The people had been taken away from their homeland in the late sixth century BC because they'd done so much evil in God's sight. *"It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence"* (2 Kings 24:20).

Despite their miserable past, God had a merciful plan for the future. They would be freed from captivity and return to Jerusalem. But they wouldn't get back to their land until they turned back to their Lord. *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,"* declares the Lord, *"and will bring you back from captivity"* (vs.13-14). There would be no bright future without repentance. Any Jeremiah 29:11 devotional message to a mixed crowd ought to include a warning for unbelievers and backsliders to seek a relationship with God.

Notice also that the Jewish exiles would not be freed immediately. *"This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place'"* (vs.10). Do any of the greeting cards that use vs.11 explain that the original recipients had to wait so long to see the promise come true – and that many of that generation wouldn't even live to see it happen? We might be tempted to assure people whom we love that God will deliver them from the temporal consequences of their past sins after a few sincere tears; but, in fact, hard times may go on for years.

Despite the popular sentiment that God has good plans for everyone, it is simply untrue. In chapter 28, Jeremiah predicted death for a false prophet named Hananiah (who said the Babylonian captivity would be over in two years). His future wasn't too bright. *"In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died"* (28:17). If someone had sent that false prophet a Jeremiah 29:11 greeting card, it would have been a cruel joke.

God's true prophet also warned that many in Jerusalem would suffer judgment: *"... this is what the Lord says about the king who sits on David's throne and all the people who remain in this city. ... 'I will send the sword, famine and plague against them. ... For they have not listened to my words'"* (29:16-19).

So we can see that the *good news* of Jeremiah 29:11 is surrounded by very *bad news* for false prophets, and for those who reject God's true message. We should never promise such people that God will prosper them and protect them from harm. If we do, we'll be twisting Scripture.✞

Pastor Tom Warner serves on staff with Crossroads Christian Church, and as a chaplain with Ministry To The Aged, in Boise, Idaho.

..things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).



CRYPTOGRAMS



Crack the Code. Each letter stands for another letter. Once you've found one it stays the same through the verse, but each verse has a different code. (Hint: "Nation" is in each verse.)

Revelations 7:9 TEO WQLHL MLRPHL UL JTN T AHLTW UCBWSWCOL ... RHPU LILHK ETWSPE, WHSML, GLPGBL TEO BTEACTAL, NWTEOSEA MLRPHL WQL WQHPEL.

Revelations 15:4 QVV DQOBCDA EBVV LCIZ QDL ECMAYBU SZGCMZ HCK.

Psalm 22:28 IDG SDBALADL HPODLTW RD RXP ODGS MLS XP GCOPW DEPG RXP LMRADLW.

Psalm 46:10 EM XABCC, DUL NUFH ARDA B DO IFL; B HBCC EM MGDCAML DOFUI ARM UDABFUX, B HBCC EM MGDCAML BU ARM MDVAR.

Psalm 67:1-2 CHO TNY AS TIHLPNXD BN XD HFY AJSDD XD HFY CHGS RPD VHLS DRPFS XUNF XD, BRHB ONXI EHOD CHO AS GFNEF NF SHIBR, ONXI DHJWHBPNF HCNFT HJJ FHBPNFD.



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Unscramble each Bible verse

1. Mark 12:31

your as Love yourself. neighbor

2. Romans 13:10

neighbor. no to Love does its harm

3. Romans 15:2

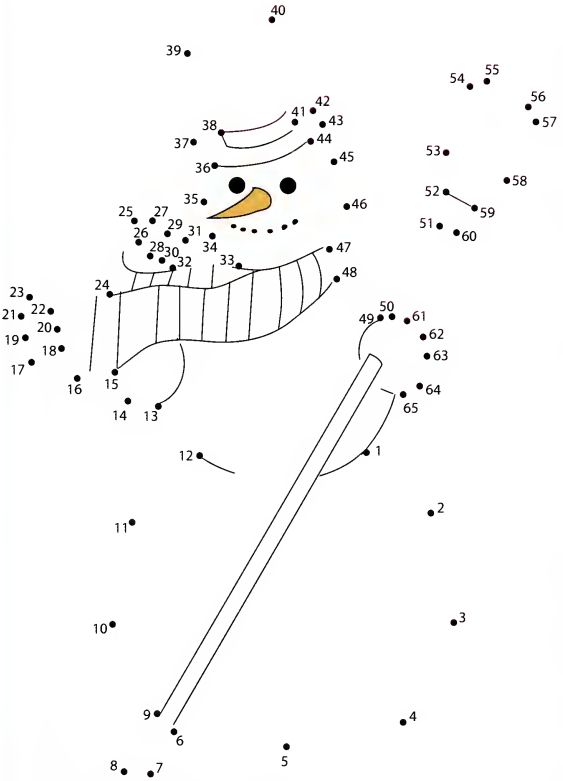
should his build good, of for up. his please neighbor to Each him us

4. Ephesians 4:25

truthfully must off each neighbor, are all falsehood put one of members speak Therefore of and to we for body. you his



Connect the dots for some winter fun!



DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES...



By Carole Lewis

Women on Wall Street, soccer moms behind the wheel of the SUV — and hey! — all of us are searching for something to make us complete.

Wisteria is the name of a lovely, twisting, climbing vine with beautiful cascading flowers. Although covered with beautiful blossoms possessing a sweet fragrance, this member of the pea family will destroy whatever it clings to, including brick walls, oak trees and gardens, unless regularly pruned with sharp tools.

Wisteria Lane is a very appropriate address for five provocative, tantalizing, and bewitching women on the controversial television series, *Desperate Housewives*. Three of these women are mothers. This is TV's exaggerated depiction of suburban motherhood in the post-feminist age.

On Wisteria Lane there is manipulation, deception, tomfoolery, theft, sex, social gaffes, alienation, false assumptions, adultery, addiction, jealousy, blackmail, anger, teenage alienation, suicide, dark secrets and murder — all existing beneath the flowery masks of perfect people.

On Wisteria Lane, no one is fulfilled, although every one strives for the elusive ideal of happiness. These women are trying to seize, discover, and even create contentment from their complicated lives. Generally, they fail.

In Luke, chapter 15, Jesus speaks of another "desperate housewife," a woman looking for something lost. He speaks of her as if she were "every woman" who has lost, sought and found a coin worth about a day's wage — like, say, a $100 bill. To her, nothing mattered at the moment except finding what



was valuable to her. She was desperate and diligent because she needed it, and until she found it, she couldn't be peaceful. She worked willingly and diligently with what simple tools she had — a broom and a lamp. She swept the packed-earth floor hoping to hear a tinkling sound, or see a flash of silver sparkling in the lamplight. She clung to her work as she pursued her hope.

Aren't we the same? We use the tools we have at hand as we seek what we've lost, as we seek to fill whatever empty hole gnaws at our hearts, as we seek happiness. It doesn't matter if we live in a hovel, a tenement, in the projects, in a double-wide, a suburban ranch, a mini-mansion or the manor house. Mothers who work outside the home, fathers who work only at home, singles, elderly and many others find themselves desperately scrounging for what's missing and seeking what's lost. Unlike the woman in Jesus' parable, many are unable to name exactly what it is that's missing.

But did the woman in Luke's gospel despair that she would never find the missing coin? She never says, "I'll not find it! It's lost! I'm lost! Oh, woe is me!" Instead, she lights the lamp and sweeps the floor until she finds it, probably just as her mother had taught. She keeps at it. She *hope*s and eventually finds her peace of mind.

The women of Wisteria Lane, for all their frailties and flaws, keep hoping that they, too, will succeed and find that which eludes them. They are diligent, even driven. Sometimes their goodness buds and blossoms, too. By the diligent seeking, they begin to discover themselves, and slowly, they will find what they seek, or at least this is what is hoped.

In fact, both the women of Wisteria Lane and the woman of Luke 15 know that there is a future in which what is lost will be found. They have, in their own way, a sense of hope. And hope is what encourages us, nurtures us, and empowers us to live faithfully every day.

Wisteria is what a lot of people, including those desperate housewives on television, call "hope" these days. It's not. Such behavior is hope on crack. There's going to be a meltdown.

Sometimes we, too, feel ourselves getting desperate about our family lives or lot. We become disoriented, unable to find fulfillment or what we need, maybe not even knowing what we need or what it is we want. Like the woman with her lamp and broom, it's diligence and hope that matters. If you are spiritually diligent, soulfully hopeful and seeking, here are questions you might ask yourself:

What do I really need? For what do I hope? For what am I truly desperate? What will give me fulfillment? What will fill the emptiness and the hole in my life? Where is happiness found?

The Biblical woman sought her missing piece of silver. The women of Wisteria Lane seek their missing peace of mind — and so do we.

For us, it's Jesus Christ who is the beginning, middle, and end of our faith. It is because Jesus lived, died and lives again that we can function in the present — confident that the future belongs to God.

Such knowledge and faith keeps us from desperation. From wisteria. From hysteria...

But not from hope!✞

Carole Lewis is retired after 30 years in the publishing business. She and her husband, Wes, and son, Clinton, have lived in Villisca, Iowa all their lives. She is a member of the Villisca Advent Christian Church where she serves as secretary to the church board and the pastor. She also serves as President of the Missouri Valley AC Conference and serves as the Regional WHFMS treasurer. In her "spare" time, she enjoys cooking, reading and working on her computer.

REFLECTIONS

By Pam Buchanan



Recently I was privileged to witness a very happy homecoming. The setting was an airport terminal, and, even though that is not my favorite place to be, this particular evening I was counting it a blessing. As I watched people disembark the plane that I was to soon board, I was very startled to hear shrill screaming (usually NOT what you care to hear in an airport these days).

As my attention turned toward the commotion, I saw a handsome service man had appeared in the doorway. My focus turned to the awaiting family to see various reactions. Some were running into his arms, others were visibly emotional and still others seemed to be in "shock and awe!" I know it's not polite to stare, but I couldn't help enjoying their moment — and I wasn't alone. There was a terminal full of smiles and tears as we collectively applauded this reunion from a distance.

My thoughts immediately turned to a prayer of gratitude for his safe arrival and his sacrificial service to our country. I couldn't help but think of the many others who remain in

REFLECTIONS

harm's way, and I started naming names in prayer that their families, too, would experience just such a squeal of delight in some airport soon. And my heart was also aware of the many families who have lost a dear, precious family member through the years of conflicts that our nation has seen, praying that they would feel God' comfort and that their memories would become treasures.

But more than all of this, my thoughts descended upon another future homecoming for all Christians. One day, the trumpet will blow and the sky will open up before our very eyes to reveal our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, returning to reunite with his family. I imagine some of the same reactions to his coming will be those I observed in the airport ... some will run into his arms, we will probably hear some squeals and screams, and I am sure that tears will flow. No doubt this grand event will be shocking and awesome for all of us. What a blessed event this will be for those who call him, "Father". ...

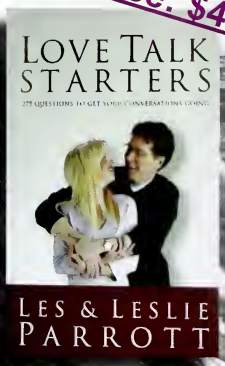
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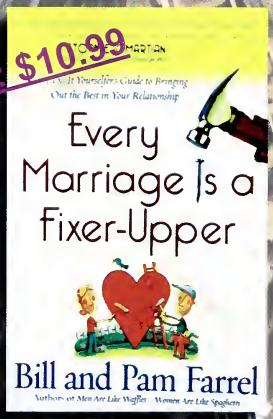


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From the Editor



"Father, forgive them. ..."

The theme of this issue of the Witness is "forgiveness." What could be more appropriate, a few weeks before Easter, as we prepare to commemorate Christ's suffering, death, burial, and glorious resurrection? At the beginning of his awful agony Jesus prayed for those who'd pounded the nails into his hands, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34).

This verse intrigues me. What amazing generosity! I find it difficult to forgive someone who has done me even the slightest little wrong — like getting ahead of me in the "fast lane" at the grocery store when they have 21, not "20 or fewer," packages to pay for. Jesus was willing to forgive those who crucified him. What a high standard he sets for us!

Maybe I find it difficult to understand the verse because of my tendency to be overly analytical. Jesus is asking God to forgive people who haven't repented. That goes against my "theological grain." Scripture after scripture seems to teach that repentance must come first, and, only then, forgiveness. Luke 17:3-4, for example: *"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he*

(Editorial continued on page 7)

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An unthinkable event in her past left her asking ...









What Is Forgiveness?

Anonymous

I sat in my front yard and played alone with my toys. The house across the street was quiet – not like the day before. That day, the yard had been full of guests and somehow I had ended up there, where the teenage son of the family strolled around the yard with me, holding my hand. I felt special then, a little eight-year-old being welcomed into a grown-up party. Then the boy invited me into his home. He took me into his room and molested me.

I would never go to that house again! It was yucky! I pushed the memory away and never thought of it again — not until I got married. For years after my marriage, I struggled with sexual adjustment issues. Could that childhood event have been the cause of my problems? Eventually a counselor confirmed that it had deeply affected me. Now I was angry! If only I could confront the person whose action had harmed me psychologically all these years. I would tell him how his one selfish act had caused me so many years of struggle and pain in my marriage. It was not possible, though; it had been decades since I had lived in that neighborhood and I did not know who this person was.

Then I read that emotional healing could only come as I forgave the perpetrator. I endeavored to do that. I prayed about it. Yet I still longed to confront him with his sin. Had I failed to forgive him? My emotions had not changed. I asked God if I had more work to do on this forgiveness issue.

The turning point came soon afterward, when we were visiting my mother. She and my husband loved to engage in long theological discussions. These discussions were usually too intense for me, and I'd listen with half an ear. Today, though, they were discussing the subject of forgiveness. I listened closely. I was surprised when my husband stated:

> "Forgiveness requires repentance on the part of the offender. Just as God does not grant forgiveness until there is repentance, we also cannot extend forgiveness if there is no repentance, for forgiveness involves reconciliation. When this does not happen, all that remains is justice. We can trust God, though, to bring about the justice that is needed. The Bible tells us: '*Vengeance is mine, says the Lord; I will repay.*'"

I left the room to take my shower, thinking about the words I had just heard. It was as if God had spoken his answer to me. As the water streamed over me, I felt a release concerning this person who had harmed me. He was in God's hands. God would deal with him as he saw best. Maybe he would reach this man with his mercy. If not, he would take care of the consequences. Either way, it was OK with me. He was in God's hands.

All of us have struggled with the issue of forgiveness. In most cases, we do know the person who hurt us, and we can seek to offer forgiveness. Our first step may need to be a loving confrontation. This can be very difficult; not all of us are confrontational people. I know that I am not. I usually wait to see if the person has a change of heart. If that

happens, I let it go. If the person does not have a change of heart, it is my responsibility to approach that person after praying for God's help.

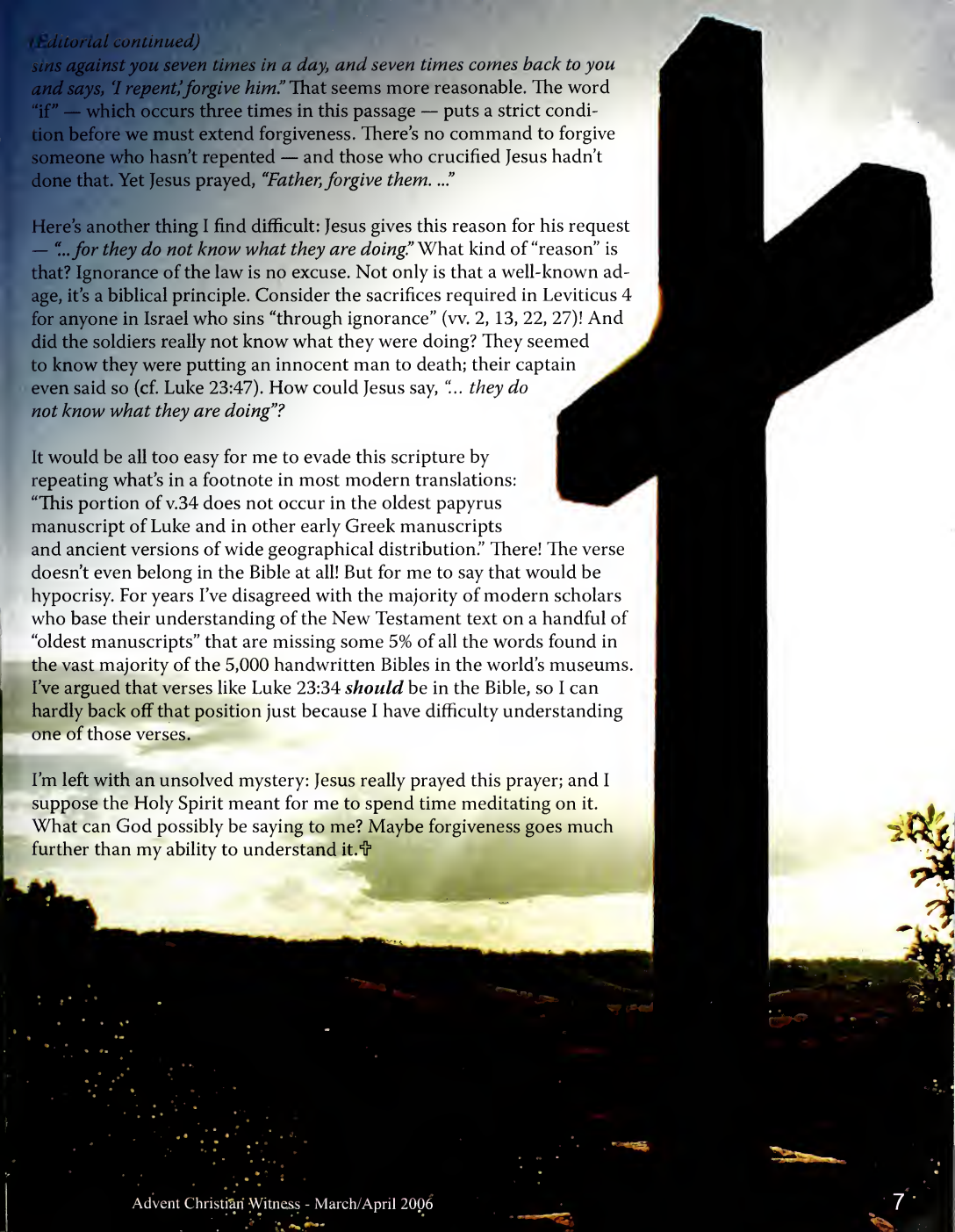
My husband and I lost a ministry once because I confided in a close personal friend that we no longer believed in an important doctrine of a church where we were pastoring. I shared that we were waiting for God to show us what to do, and we were seeking other avenues of ministry. We hoped to find a ministry that was not pastoring. Then we could explain that God had opened up this door for us. We did not want to hurt this church.

After my friend and I spoke about it several times, she became troubled. She felt that we were wrong to wait to share our change of belief with the church. Without telling me this, she went to our elders. It was a very painful ending to that ministry. As I grieved for our loss, I prayed about my feelings toward my friend. I accepted that it would take a while to work through all my emotions and that no matter what I was feeling, God loved me. After a number of weeks went by, I sent her a letter telling her that I had been hurt because she had not believed the best in me. We were reconciled. She later expressed thankfulness for my forgiveness.

When I look back on times that people have hurt me, I have come to these conclusions about forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness involves reconciliation. When reconciliation is possible, seek it. If necessary, confront the person in love. (See Matthew 18:15-17 and Leviticus 19:17.)
2. When confrontation and reconciliation are impossible, leave it in God's hands. He is both just and merciful. We can trust him to deal with the person in his own way. It is a loving choice to release a person into God's hands, trusting him to do what's best in that person's life. If the person never receives God's mercy, they will experience his justice. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.)
3. The decision to forgive does not automatically erase unpleasant emotions. While struggling to forgive, accept the fact that emotions do not change overnight. Know that God loves us anyway. Remember that we are important to God. What concerns us concerns him. He cares about our struggles. (Psalm 103:13-14.)
4. Forgiveness is a decision to not seek retaliation or wish the person harm. Proverbs 24:17 says, *"Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice."* Proverbs 20:22 says, *"Do not say, I'll pay you back for this wrong! Wait for the Lord and he will deliver you."* (See also 1 Peter 3:9)
5. As hard as it may be, pray for the person who has hurt you. Ask God to show you what to pray for in that person's life. Also, as hard as it may be, choose to do good if God gives the opportunity. (See Proverbs 25:21 and Matthew 5:44.)✞





(Editorial continued)
sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." That seems more reasonable. The word "if" — which occurs three times in this passage — puts a strict condition before we must extend forgiveness. There's no command to forgive someone who hasn't repented — and those who crucified Jesus hadn't done that. Yet Jesus prayed, *"Father, forgive them. ..."*

Here's another thing I find difficult: Jesus gives this reason for his request — *"... for they do not know what they are doing."* What kind of "reason" is that? Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Not only is that a well-known adage, it's a biblical principle. Consider the sacrifices required in Leviticus 4 for anyone in Israel who sins "through ignorance" (vv. 2, 13, 22, 27)! And did the soldiers really not know what they were doing? They seemed to know they were putting an innocent man to death; their captain even said so (cf. Luke 23:47). How could Jesus say, *"... they do not know what they are doing"?*

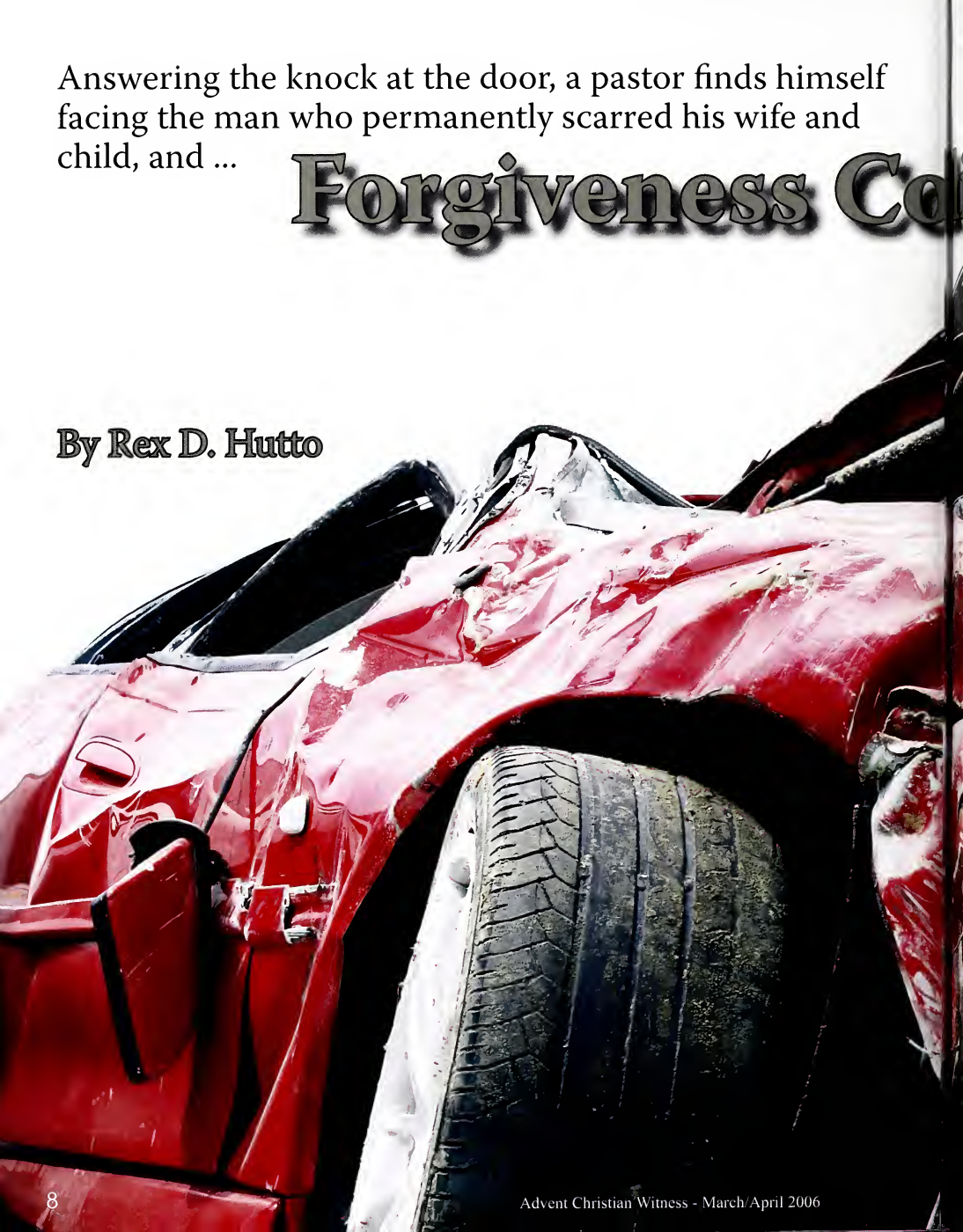
It would be all too easy for me to evade this scripture by repeating what's in a footnote in most modern translations: "This portion of v.34 does not occur in the oldest papyrus manuscript of Luke and in other early Greek manuscripts and ancient versions of wide geographical distribution." There! The verse doesn't even belong in the Bible at all! But for me to say that would be hypocrisy. For years I've disagreed with the majority of modern scholars who base their understanding of the New Testament text on a handful of "oldest manuscripts" that are missing some 5% of all the words found in the vast majority of the 5,000 handwritten Bibles in the world's museums. I've argued that verses like Luke 23:34 ***should*** be in the Bible, so I can hardly back off that position just because I have difficulty understanding one of those verses.

I'm left with an unsolved mystery: Jesus really prayed this prayer; and I suppose the Holy Spirit meant for me to spend time meditating on it. What can God possibly be saying to me? Maybe forgiveness goes much further than my ability to understand it.✞

Answering the knock at the door, a pastor finds himself facing the man who permanently scarred his wife and child, and ...

Forgiveness Co

By Rex D. Hutto



lides With the Past



Tom and Joanne rode in contented silence as they returned to the parsonage from a pastoral call. Joanne had earned her "MRS. degree" by working Tom through seminary, and now they were enjoying the ups and downs of a young couple in ministry. Serving God by serving people fit them well, and they could imagine no life other than the one they were living. She placed her hand on her growing belly and sighed contentedly. They were both excited about the pending birth of their first child. Could life possibly get any better than this?

"Tom!"

Joanne had time for nothing more than a staccato scream before headlights crossed the median and the quiet of the night exploded into a pandemonium of squealing tires, crumpling metal and breaking glass. The horrible cacophony was quickly replaced by much softer sounds: An errant hubcap seeking a resting place on the pavement. The hiss of radiator steam. The quiet moans of Tom and the other driver. But Joanne made no sound.

"Jo ... " Mumbling through bleeding lips, Tom willed himself to some semblance of consciousness and turned in the twisted wreckage so see the still, mangled form of his wife. "Jo ... " he said a second time. It was a haunting, pathetic sound, like a wounded animal. The name he so loved exploded in his soul as it slipped from his lips. He lost consciousness.

Distant muffled voices. Pain. *Can't ... move. Where ... am ... ? What ... hap ... ?* Tom tried once again to will himself to consciousness and clarity of mind, but was less successful. It felt as if he had been drugged. *Hosp ... ? Jo ... Where ... Jo? Is ... she ... ?* Was he actually saying the words or just thinking them? He didn't know.

The crash came back to him with awful clarity. Then the image of Joanne, crumpled in a bloody heap, covered with broken glass. He tried to reach out to her, but she wasn't there, and he could only barely move his hands as his arms still lay at his side,

Slowly the anesthetic began to wear off and Tom could force his eyes open, quickly retreating back from the harsh hospital lights to the comfort of darkness. As he blinked once, twice, three times, the figures in the room began to come into focus.

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*Not their real names.

He instinctively knew that he had a confused look on his face and was embarrassed to be seen that way by those standing around his bed. He chided himself for such a foolish thought. That was the least of his worries.

He was thirsty ... terribly, terribly thirsty. But greater than his need for water was his need to know about ... Or did he really want to know?

"Jo ...?" Forcing that single syllable from his mouth reminded him of trying to bench press 250 pounds in competition with his macho high school football buddies.

> Rage suddenly filled him as he realized that "the least of these brothers of mine" was the drunk who had ruined his and Joanne's lives ...

"She's alive," a voice said softly. An image came into focus — a doctor in a white lab coat that was spotted with blood. "But she's in very critical condition. She was hurt badly, and we don't know if she is going to make it. I'm sorry."

Tears filled Tom's eyes as he remembered ... they weren't just a couple anymore. They were going to be a family. "Ba ... ba-by?"

"Miraculously," the doctor said, "the baby is alive, too. We'd like to do a Caesarean section, but your wife is too weak, and the baby isn't far enough along. It would probably kill both of them. The survival of your baby depends on the survival of your wife."

"Want ... see ..."

"I'm afraid that's not a good idea right now," the doctor said wearily. "We're still working on her, and you need rest yourself. I assure you, we're doing everything we can, and we'll keep you apprised of her condition."

"Other ... driver?"

Anger flashed in the doctor's eyes as he said grimly, "He was drunk. We treated him for minor wounds, and he was released after the police questioned him." Against his will, Tom lapsed once again into unconsciousness.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The details of this story have been fictionalized, but Tom and Joanne are very real. Painfully real. They have known more pain in their lives than any other couple my wife and I have known.

Many years ago, when their accident occurred, drunk-driving laws weren't as strong as they are now. The other driver suffered no legal consequences as a result of his choice. Tom and Joanne were not so fortunate.

Tom recovered relatively quickly. Joanne survived and slowly recovered, but was horribly disfigured. Many rounds of painful cosmetic surgery later she was, at best, a very plain looking woman. They destroyed all their photographs of her before the accident, the reminders of her previous beauty being too painful to bear. Whenever they looked at one, rather than seeing a lovely young woman, they saw a drunk driver who stole from them something they could never regain.

Their baby survived as well. Joanne carried her to term, but they learned soon after the delivery that their daughter was severely retarded as a result of the accident. Tom and Joanne were determined to care for her at home, but after a few years found themselves unable to do so and made the painful decision to place her in an institution where they continue to visit her regularly.

One evening many years later, as Tom and Joanne were relaxing after dinner, the parsonage doorbell rang. It was not unusual for underprivileged people, knowing it was a church parsonage, to come to their door seeking food or other help. Compelled by Jesus' words, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me," they were glad to do whatever they could to help.

"I'm awful sorry to bother you, Reverend," the

disheveled man said, "but I'm in a bad way. Haven't eaten for two days and don't have no money to get no food. Been sleepin' at the rescue mission, but had to leave 'cause you can only stay there five days at a stretch. I know I oughta be payin' my own way and all, but you see ... I have a little drinking problem and ..." He looked down in shame. "Do you think you might be able to help me out a bit?"

Instinctively, habitually, Tom started to spring into do-what-I-can mode, but he paused. This poor fellow looked familiar. Tom knew him from somewhere ...

"Just as ..."

Yeah, "just as"! I've never hurt anyone like this piece of excrement has.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."

Oh, come on! You can't possibly mean that my being angry at this guy ... OK, hating him ... is as bad as

> God, I can't do it. I ... just ... can't ... do ... it. If you want me to forgive him, you'll have to give me the strength.

Rage suddenly filled him as he realized that "the least of these brothers of mine" was the drunk who had ruined his and Joanne's lives, stolen her beauty, and destroyed any hope of their daughter ever living a normal life. "A little drinking problem" indeed!

Words Tom had not used for many years filled his mind as he stood face-to-face with the most disgusting specimen of humanity he could imagine. He didn't deserve to be "helped out." Didn't deserve to *live*. He deserved to suffer as he had caused them to suffer, and then die as he had caused their dreams to die. Plans began to form in Tom's mind to make that fantasy a reality. *No one would probably ever miss this slimy little ... I could probably get away with it, and no one would be any the wiser. Just invite him in, and he'll never be heard from again.*

"Father, forgive them. ..." Tom's frantic thoughts stopped dead in their tracks as words nearly 2000 years old entered his mind uninvited.

That's all well and good, Tom mused, *but I'm not the Father. And I'm not about to forgive this ...*

"Forgiving one another, just as in Christ God has forgiven you."

That's not fair! You can't possibly expect me to ... No way!

what he did to us?

"There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

God, I can't do it. I ... just ... can't ... do ... it. If you want me to forgive him, you'll have to give me the strength. ...

Many thoughts can run through a man's mind in a brief moment of time. The hungry man on the parsonage doorstep perceived only a moment's hesitation as Tom looked at him quizzically.

"Let me get my coat," the pastor said. "I'll take you out for a nice dinner. Hey, your coat looks kind of thin. I think I might have a heavier one that will fit you."

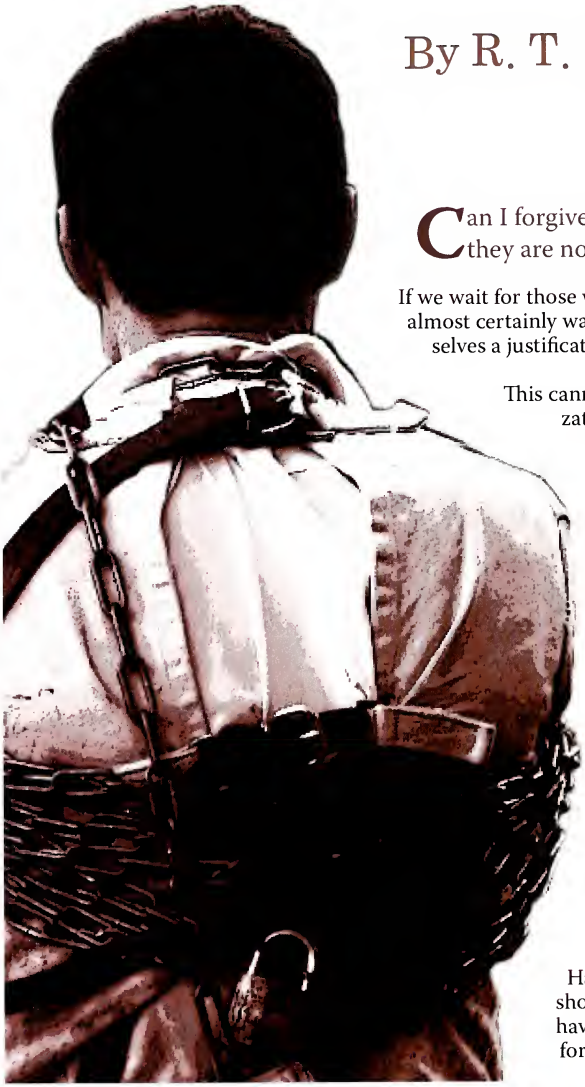
"Thanks, mister," the man said. "A guy doesn't meet someone like you every day."

"Actually, there's someone else I'd like you to meet."

Forgiveness is a wonderful sermon topic. Sometimes God requires his spokesmen to practice what they preach.✞

Rev. Rex Hutto is pastor of the Bear Point AC Church in Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia.

FORGIVING THE UNREPENTANT



By R. T. Kendall

Can I forgive those who have betrayed me if they are not repentant?

If we wait for those who have hurt us to repent first, we will almost certainly wait for a long, long time. We also give ourselves a justification to stay bitter the rest of our lives.

This cannot be right. Even non-Christian organizations are emerging to show the value of forgiveness; their premise is that the greatest benefit of forgiveness accrues not to the one who is forgiven, but to the one who forgives.

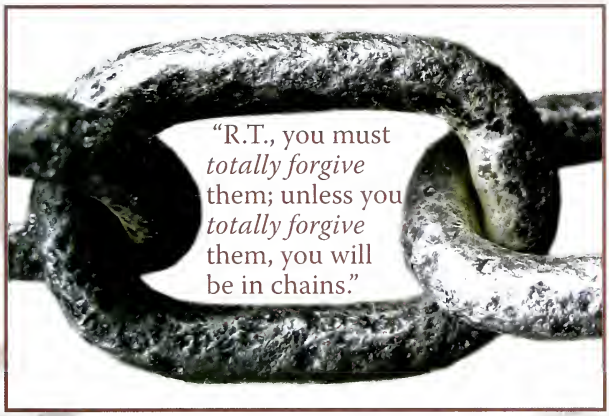
One of Jesus' main teachings was that we love our enemies, pray for them, and do good to those who have hurt us. It is curious how some of us read the Gospels over and again and miss this. We may get the theology, but not the graciousness that Jesus taught and exemplified.

How much repentance do you suppose there was at the Cross while Jesus hung there? There was not only an utter absence of repentance, but also total contempt. Jesus' reply: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Had Jesus adopted the position that he should wait until they repent, he would have shown himself to be as lost as those for whom he was dying. Furthermore, he

did not shout at them, "I forgive you." He prayed, Father *you* forgive them.

Chances are high that those who hurt us don't even think they have done anything wrong. Nine out of 10 people I have to forgive don't think they have done anything wrong to me (which suggests that I, too, have probably hurt people without knowing).



When I was minister of Westminster Chapel in London, the people who had betrayed me didn't think they had done one thing wrong. You could have hooked them up to a lie detector, and they would have passed with flying colors. My old friend, Josif Tson, whom the Communist government of Romania imprisoned and beat for his faith, came to me with the sobering words: "R.T., you must *totally forgive* them; unless you *totally forgive* them, you will be in chains."

I never went to them and told them I forgave them (this would have insulted them). It happened in my heart. Once you forgive in your heart, it ceases to be an issue whether they repent or not. The blessing I got personally from this has been incalculable.

When Jesus asked his disciples to love each other as he loved them (John 13:34), he knew Peter would deny him, then added to all of them: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1). Many of us forget that he was still talking to the ones he knew would desert him in a few hours.

When he showed up after his resurrection behind their closed doors, he did not say to them, "How could you do this to me?" He merely said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). He affirmed them as if nothing had happened; he let them save face.

I have answered the question "*Must* I forgive them?" Let me now answer the question "*How* am I able to forgive them?" The answer: because God has forgiven you. Are you perfect? If you say, "I haven't done what they did," I answer yes, I believe you, but you have done other things that in God's sight are likely to be just as grievous.

Not only that; you have the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22). You, therefore, can do it. In my case, I thought I couldn't. But I did. And it was the best thing I ever did. But it wasn't easy.

The signs to know you have totally forgiven can be summarized this way: (1) You do not tell anybody what they did to you (this would be trying to punish the one who hurt you); (2) you do not try to intimidate them; (3) you do not let them feel guilty; (4) you let them save face; (5) you accept the matter of total forgiveness as a "life sentence" — you have to keep doing it, indefinitely; (6) you pray that they will be blessed and let off the hook.

When you do these things, you have fulfilled what Jesus had in mind for you. You will never be sorry. The blessing of the Holy Spirit on you will compound and multiply to exceed your greatest expectation. Finally, the greater (or deeper) the hurt, the greater the blessing that will be yours.✞

R.T. Kendall, formerly minister of Westminster Chapel, London, now retired, is author of "Total Forgiveness" (Charisma House, 2002).

Article from March 2005 issue of "Christianity Today. "



The View From the Log House

By Josh Tate

I woke up this morning to find that it had snowed during the night. It was the kind of snow that forms pillow-like mounds on the tops of parked cars and traces every branch and twig in white. From my bedroom window I looked at the railing, which runs around the center grass, and visually estimated that about six or seven inches of snow had fallen while I was asleep.

My wife and children were still sleeping, so I quietly pulled on my clothes and laced up my boots in the dark. I get a thrill out of being the first person to walk through a virgin blanket of snow. I get the same feeling when I dip a knife into the uniform surface of a new jar of peanut butter, or when I lob a rock into the still surface of a placid pond.

I slipped downstairs, avoiding the third stair — the one that creaks — and stepped out into the hush of early dawn. I enjoyed the "scrunch-scrunch" of my boots as I walked through the snow and admired the way snow softens and rounds every surface. Every tree was drooping and heavy-laden with the stuff. The two little trees by the shuffleboard court were doubled over under the weight of the snow so that they looked more horizontal than vertical.

After meandering my way through the camp I came to the stream, which was gurgling and splashing its way down the mountain. I thought about how the stream would change in a couple of days when the snow melts. Then it would be a roaring and rushing thing, but

this morning it was calmly picking its way between the rocks.

I walked along the stream for awhile taking note of the different animal tracks, which criss-crossed my own. Deer, coyotes, and rabbits had all passed that way before me. I decided to follow a set of deer tracks, which turned to the left and set off up the hillside. I had wanted to see the view from the ridge above, and I had read that wild animals usually follow the path of least resistance. I hoped that was correct as I looked up at the steep rugged hillside. After squirming my way through manzanita bushes and clambering over several fallen trees, I decided that the deer did not have my best interests at heart. At one point a squirrel, scurrying along a branch, caused a shower of heavy wet snow to rain down on my head. I was beginning to think that the forest creatures were having a little fun at my expense, so I decided to quit the deer's trail and strike out on my own.

I walked for about another ten minutes through the snowy woods before I emerged at a spot where the trees cleared, and there was a truly incredible view of the mountains. The slope, which I had just climbed, dropped away below me and rose again on the other side of the stream. In the distance rose the peaks of Mt. Tahquitz and Mt. San Jacinto. In the light of early morning the mountains were covered in a sparkling blanket of white.

I was reminded of Isaiah 44:22-23, which reads, *"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob. He displays his glory in Israel."*

It seemed to me that the Lord's glory was on full display this morning in these mountains. What a wonderful and gracious God we serve! As I walked back home, retracing my steps down the slope and along the stream, I joined with the mountains, and forest in singing his praises. *"This is my Father's world; And to my listening ears, All nature sings, and round me rings The music of the spheres."* Lord, I am so grateful for the beauty of your creation, and thankful beyond words to be numbered among the redeemed.✞

Josh Tate is the Assistant Diretor of Camp Maranatha in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California. He graduated from Houghton College with a major in Business Administration. Prior to going into full-time ministry at the camp, Josh was a police officer for the city of St. Albans in Vermont. He and his wife, Sarah, have a two children.

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by Dr. V

"Leadership in trouble"

— "Our church has been without a pastor for a year and a half and the superintendent says that there are no new candidates."

— "Our last pastor was a good preacher, but he lacked so many other skills it just caught up with him. We had to have a vote of confidence, and he lost."

— "Burned out, I'd call it a nervous break down. The guy just came unglued. I guess he was just not cut out for being a pastor."

Churches today are facing a serious problem. There is a leadership shortage on the horizon for every denomination in the United States. The Catholic Church felt it first. Unable to supply priests for their churches, they have been forced to close hundreds of parishes. The Protestant church is just starting to sense the first wave of the shortage.

In *Christianity Today*, Ken Walker's article entitled *Empty Pulpit Crisis* cited research from the Lutheran Church: "recent studies project that by 2020, 30 to 40 percent of our congregations will have no pastoral leadership." The United Church of Christ expressed the same concern predicting a "looming clergy shortage." The United Method-

vercoming crisis driven church

lliam H. Chadwick



ists report that "seminary candidates have dropped an alarming 21 percent in the last decade." Across denominational lines fewer individuals are willing to serve in what *Leadership* magazine calls "the highest burnout profession in the world" — pastoral ministry.

Burnout and the Crisis-Driven church

Crisis-Driven churches are exacting an alarming toll on pastors. In these settings a difficult profession is made harder due to the subjective nature of an organization that has lost its God-ordained purpose and struggles to survive any way it can. In the Crisis-Driven church the clergy receives performance pressure from two sides.

First they are God's leaders commissioned to bring success, while at the same time they are employees quickly blamed for any failure in the church. "There is a strange need for people to idolize the pastor," says Dr. Archibald Hart, dean of the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Seminary. "They put them on pedestals, but then enjoy yanking them off!" This environment creates performance-anxiety that can become emotionally overwhelming for many in ministry.

Richelle Wiseman, in her article at www.christianity.ca entitled *"Holy Burnout,"* suggests that one of

the major causes of pastoral burnout is generated by a classic characteristic of Crisis-Driven churches — "unclear and unrealistic expectations."

EXPECTATIONS

There is a law in physics that simply states, "Nature abhors a vacuum." In the Crisis-Driven church the role of the pastor is often poorly defined, creating a job-description vacuum. Parishioners have learned that with enough force, they can project their expectations into this vacuum and receive the satisfaction they desire. Pastors in these settings quickly find themselves confronted with an unrestricted list of demands. This is a recipe for burnout.

Let me illustrate this point.

At a recent Pastor's retreat I had a volunteer act as a "pastoral candidate." I made the rest of the pastors the "Search committee" of a church looking for a new minister. Equipping the candidate with a flip chart, I asked her to record what the *primary* roles were that the search committee felt their next minister must perform. Turning to the search committee she asked the question, "What are you looking for in your next pastor?"

Each of the search committee members quickly shouted out various roles: "Good preaching, visitation, Bible studies on Wednesday nights, prayer meetings, small groups, mentoring/discipleship programs, evangelist, attracts new families, Sunday school director, men's ministry, woman's ministry, keeps regular office hours, counseling, develops lay leadership, singles retreats, marriage enrichment programs, youth programs for teens, junior high ministry, adventure club, short term missions trips, administrator, works with other churches, supports our conference, is spiritual, helps keep the place up, will live in the parsonage, works well with the church board, continues their education, and uses PowerPoint in the service!" In the end 32 items were on the page, limited only by the amount of time that we had for this exercise.

Next I asked the candidate to affix the estimated amount of time in a week that each of the items on the page would require. Preaching — 20 hours for research and preparation, visitation — eight hours, Bible study — two hours, prayer meeting — two hours, and so it went. At the end of the exercise over 135 hours per week were required to meet the expectations of the search committee! With only 168 hours in a week that leaves 33 hours for the pastor to eat, sleep, stay spiritually sharp and enjoy his/her family.

> "... The largest churches in the world have pastors who have maintained the same pulpit for 10 or more years."

Unfortunately pastors in Crisis-Driven churches often try to meet all of the demands. Soon a very predictable dissatisfaction with the pastor's performance emerges in the congregation. The net result is church burnout, and a clergy population that on a national average changes pulpits every 24 months.

"This cycle," says Dr. Peter Wagner, a national church growth expert, "never allows a church to experience the power curve of a pastor's ministry. Research clearly shows the most dynamic and productive years of ministry for a pastor in a church are years *five through seven*. This cycle is repeated *several more times* throughout their ministry. The largest churches in the world have pastors who have maintained the same pulpit for 10 or more years."

BREAKING THE CYCLE

How can a Crisis-Driven church create more realistic expectations of its leadership? First,

identify the ***leadership structure*** of the church. Second, define ***the goals*** of the church and *empower the leadership* to achieve them.

Leadership Structure

In churches of 100 or less the pastor is traditionally the only full-time church employee. As such he/she is frequently looked upon as the leader and primary care-giver to the flock. The assumption is commonly made that the pastor is in charge.

Problems arise when dedicated lay volunteers view themselves as having protective ownership of the ministries they perform. Frequently sparks fly and fires start when the wires of perceived pastoral leadership are crossed with the wires of perceived laity ownership!

This is where the question of "*leadership authority*" raises its head. Who decides where the church is going? Who decides how the church will get there? Who controls the troops and the finances?

In the Crisis-Driven church true leadership rarely exists in the stated organizational chart. Unofficial church leadership is often assumed by an individual Wagner calls a "gatekeeper." "Gatekeepers are those individuals who control strategic areas of the ministry such as treasurers, Sunday school directors, or worship leaders. They use their power and influence to manipulate the leadership of the church. Although they believe they are acting in the best interests of the church, they often are the epicenters of conflict and disasters." To create an environment where the clergy can prosper, a well-defined leadership structure must be established.

There are many successful models of church leadership that work *effectively*. T.D. Jakes runs his church as the sole manager of the entire operation. Bill Hybels surrounds himself with a staff and board that effectively make the decisions for the ministry. Others prefer elder boards, official boards, or congregational forms of government. The point is not *what system* you use, but doing the hard work of *defining a system* and *using it*.

Defining Goals

Once a leadership model has been adopted, a decision-making process must be entered into that establishes *clear goals and direction*. Until the goals and direction are clearly defined, there will always be competitive forces seeking to command the resources of the ministry. Rick Warren states, "If you want to build a healthy, strong, and growing church, you must spend time laying a solid foundation. This is done by clarifying, in the minds of everyone involved, exactly why the church exists and what it is supposed to do."

To lay this foundation, a church must prioritize the "to do" list. In the Crisis-Driven church the "to do" list is highly subjective, making it both endless and potentially a point of conflict. Eliminating an item on this list means that someone will be disappointed. In many cases the fear of



conflict holds the leadership hostage and stops the church from achieving success in ministry. Until that list is profitable for the common good and small enough to be achievable, the church will be unable to attain its kingdom potential.

One method of overcoming the subjective "to do" list involves the use of a "force-field analysis." Economics professor Don Toby states, "A force-field analysis is the simple process of beginning with a large list of items and systematically reducing the list until you end up with a manageable number of things that you can really accomplish."

Back at the Pastors Retreat, I had the group go through the process of a force-field analysis. To do this I asked them to pick the top 20 items on the list. Then I said, "Out of these 20 items, what are the 10 most important?" Once the 10 were selected, I pressed the group again, "What are the seven most important?" Then finally, "Which five do we absolutely need?" "Is it unreasonable," I then asked the group, "given the constraints of time and money, to have a pastor's job performance based on achieving these five items?" The response was, "No." Clearly, if we did *these five well* we would be a productive church. "But who will do the rest of the ministries?" was the unasked question. The answer of course, is the Body of Christ.

Another critical ingredient involved in regulating goals and objectives is to empower your leadership to say "*no.*" "No" defines authority. "No" establishes boundaries. "No" prioritizes the mission. "No" protects the resources. Saying "no" is important both for the goals of the church and the health of the leadership. "Your struggle in ministry," shared an old pastor, "will rarely be between good and bad. Almost all of your challenges will be between good, better and best. You will be tempted to say 'yes' all the time because it's all good. But to achieve excellence you need the word 'no' — applied with love and respect, but still maintaining the integrity of the 'n' and the 'o.'"

Neglected Spirituality

The last place where the Crisis-Driven church has *unrealistic expectations* is in the ability of a minister to be spiritual, creative and healthy without seasons of renewal. Although there is an assumption that the pastor has a deep relationship with God, rarely do churches provide the time for the pastor to cultivate that relationship. Instead we desire "superman" status pastors that just keep going. "People love a pastor who is on fire," shared a Pentecostal friend. "They will sit and watch him burn."

Maintaining healthy leadership requires an awareness of the emotional and physical cost of the ministry. A case in point is the difference between the number of times that most people experience the emotional loss of a loved one and the number of times clergy members experience this grief.



Most people will live to bury their parents and perhaps one or two other immediate relatives. For this they get days off, reunions with family members, outside support, months of grace to "get over it," and time between disasters. In my 25 years of pastoring, I have handled the sharp edge

of death with 68 families. Some were easier than others, but they all took a toll out of my own heart. There were no days off, no family members or neighbors dropping off supper, and only short breaks before the next emotional drain.

Two years after the burial of an infant who died in my arms, I swerved my car off the road and began bawling. Suppressed emotions erupted as my soul caught up with my body. Of all things, a song on the radio collapsed my heart, and I grieved. It is an unhealthy thing for people who deal with the traumas of life to be denied seasons of restoration.

The Spiritual Life Pyramid

How can a church support the spiritual and emotional life of its ministry leadership? One way is to give them time to engage in the "Spiritual Life Pyramid."

Over the past five years I have worked hard at becoming a well-balanced and productive pastor. Developing this pyramid has given me an easy set of guidelines that empowers me to be healthy, and empowers the church to objectively monitor their support of the spiritual life of their leadership.

At the tip of the pyramid is the word "Daily." I need to spend daily time with God. This is always in the morning and always before work begins. Next is the word "Weekly." Here Pastors need to develop a day for the Sabbath rest and worship *and* a day for "life." Third is the word "Monthly." Built into my world is time to



spend with spiritually-inspiring accountability partners and a mentor each month. Next in the pyramid is time "Annually" for education and spiritual renewal: one week a year, not counted as vacation time. Finally — "Sabbatical." Every five years I spend three months on paid leave from my church to restore my heart, mind, soul and strength.

Your church does not have to be big or rich to develop realistic goals and to support the individuals who serve as your pastors. What you do need is a willingness to change. By honoring those who serve, we will experience their best efforts, and their best efforts will richly bless your church and the kingdom desires of our GOD.✞

Dr. William H. Chadwick is serving as pastor of the Stroudwater Christian Church (AC) in Portland, Maine



"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" James 5:16

SPEAKING GOD'S FORGIVENESS

CONFESS YOUR SINS

A gracEmail subscriber in Missouri asks if it is right to confess our sins to another human being, and whether a believer who hears the confession can offer forgiveness in the name of Christ.

Certainly no mere human has power to forgive sins, as Jesus' enemies correctly noted (Mk. 2:5-7). However, in ever-widening circles Jesus empowered first Peter, then all the Apostles and finally the whole church to speak forgiveness in his name after he ascended to the Father (Matt. 16:18-19; John 20:21-23; Matt. 18:15-20). James later acknowledged the proper exercise of this function, both by office-bearers acting for the believing community and by individual believers as well (James 5:14-16).

The fact is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). Through the faithful obedience of Jesus Christ culminating in his death on the cross "there resulted life to all" (Rom. 5:18). The gospel is the good news of our salvation (Eph. 1:13). It is the message that, through the blood of Jesus Christ, God has "made peace" with every estranged being on earth and in heaven (Col. 1:19-20). Based on this cosmic achievement, believers can confidently assure each other of God's pardon (1 John 2:12). The same divine accomplishment also impels believers to inform others who have not yet learned of God's forgiveness and to beg them to receive God's grace and be reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20 - 6:1).

You ask about confessing sins to another person. Obviously, one should exercise judgment in selecting a person in whom to confide personal sins. Even well-intentioned people are not all capable of handling such a responsibility. For that reason, I am here encouraging what sometimes is called "the general confession," in which the gathered congregation reads together a common confession of sin and asks God's forgiveness, to which another believer responds with an affirmation of pardon. There is great blessing in hearing someone actually say, "You are forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake." With this purpose in mind, I have assembled a variety of responsive Scripture readings for use in any church that does not already have such a form. Each set includes a declaration of confession, of pardon and of praise. To access these readings, go to www.edwardfudge.com/written/confession.html . ✞

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Monkey Business

By Rex Hutto



My father was assigned to an Army anti-aircraft unit in the South Pacific during World War II. Natives on the island believed monkey meat to be a delicacy, and they showed my dad how they captured monkeys. They would place an apple in a wide-necked jar, then tie a rope around the neck of the jar. The other end of the rope was tied to a tree. Then they would wait. A monkey would come along, look in the jar and see the apple. Unable to avoid the temptation of a free apple, the monkey would reach into the jar and grab it. Though the monkey's hand fit easily through the mouth of the jar, his fist holding the apple was too large to pull out. So the monkey was confined to the jar by the apple, and the monkey, the apple and the jar were confined to the tree by the rope. The natives would then untie the rope and before you knew it ... monkey stew!

It's easy to see, of course, that the monkey's untimely demise was easily preventable. All he had to do was let go of the apple. But for reasons known only to monkey psychologists — was he too stupid or too stubborn? — the monkey would not let go of the apple, so the natives knew this to be a predictably effective way to capture monkeys.

As my father told me this fascinating anecdote, a question occurred to me: *Did the monkey have the apple, or did the apple have the monkey?* It is those things that we hold on to the tightest that imprison us, and it is only by releasing them that we are set free.

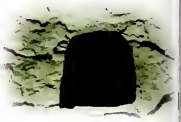
Bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness are the apples in many Christians' jars. We cling to some real or imagined offense, feeling entitled by our pain to grasp it as long and as tightly as we wish. But that very act sentences us to a prison of perpetual pain, its thick steel door tightly closed and locked against God's healing grace. Only by releasing the perpetrator through forgiveness can we ourselves be set free and made whole.

Is unforgiveness making a monkey out of you?✞

Rev. Rex Hutto is pastor of the Bear Point AC Church in Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia.

Help Peter and John find which path leads to the empty tomb.





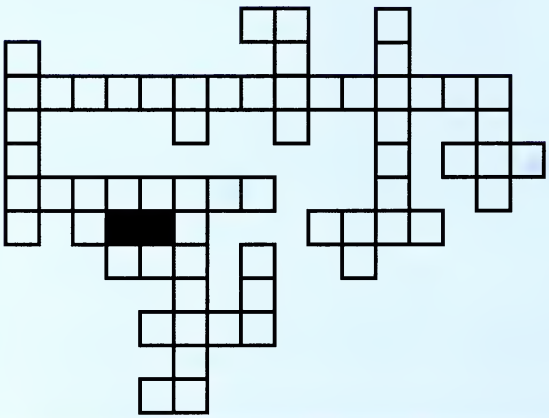
Write the letter that comes before each of the written letters.

CVU ZPV BSF B GPSHJWJOH HPE, HSBDJPVT BOE DPNQBTTJPOBUF, TMPX UP BOHFS BOE BCPVOEJOH JO MPWF. Nehemiah 9:17

GPSHJWF VT PVS TJOT, GPS XF BMTP GPSHJWF FWFSZPOF XIP TJOT BHBJOTU VT. Luke 11:4

UIF MPSE PVS HPE JT NFSDJGVM BOE GPSHJWJOH, FWFO UIPVHI XF IBWF SFCFMMFE BHBJOTU IJN. Daniel 9:9

Find all these words from I John 1:9 in the word search below. (Repeated words are used one time)



If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Drop the letters into the columns below in the correct order to read Psalm 103:11-13.

A	F	E	A	A	B	F	A	E	E	G	A	E	A	D	D	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	C	E	A	E	A	A	A
A	I	I	C	E	F	H	E	H	I	L	H	H	D	E	F	A	E	F	A	H	F	A	C	H	E	A	L	D	H	H
E	N	O	H	N	H	I	H	M	M	M	I	O	E	E	H	O	H	R	E	I	H	O	H	M	F	E	N	E	E	I
F	N	R	N	O	M	O	H	M	M	O	L	S	N	N	O	O	N	R	H	S	H	O	R	N	H	G	R	H	S	O
O	S	S	O	O	S	R	I	O	O	S	O	U	R	R	S	W	O	S	R	T	R	S	S	O	I	I	R	S	S	R
S	S		S	R		T	O	S	S	S	T	V	S	W		W	T	U	S	T	S	S	T	S	P	M	S	W		S
T			S	S		T	R	V		S	V													T	V					S

Cross out every other letter, beginning with the first letter

SFAOBRKIDFUYROPULFMODRRGFIHVJEQMAERNXWCHDEGNHTUHJEIYKSWISN
AACGVABIHNGSTTYYJOKUPYOOEUWRSHGEJAKVMECNVLBYZFAASTWHQEERU
WIIOLBLFAHLNSHODFCOGRHGDIHVOEPYJOGU.

Matthew 6:14

THE LIFELINE OF FORGIVENESS



by Becky Nicoll

I had the privilege of growing up in the ministry. I learned many times over the truth and reality of forgiveness. It had been exemplified for me as I grew into a young woman. We all remember the Bible passage in John 8:1-11, where the adulteress was brought before Jesus, and her accusers knew that this was going to be the big one. There was no way that Jesus was going to go against the laws of Moses, yet as Jesus drew in the sand, he said to the accusers, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." He continued to draw in the sand, and one by one the accusers laid down their stones and left. When he asked the adulteress, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" she replied, "No one, sir." "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go and sin no more."

MY JOURNEY

In 1971 my father, Clint Taber, accepted a call to be the pastor of the Portsmouth Advent Christian Church, in Portsmouth, N.H. I was never so thrilled to be there as the day that I met one of the friends of a boy in the youth group. It was February vacation when I first met Michael Leach. I was all of 13 years old, and Michael was 14 years old.

On May 1, 1976 I married Mike at the Portsmouth church. It was a beautiful wedding, and I had the honor of my grandfather, Edwin K. Gedney; my uncle, Vincent Taber; and my father, Clinton Taber, all assisting in our wedding ceremony. It was the beginning of our journey together, and all was right with the world.

Mike and I lived in Portsmouth, and in January 1978, we welcomed into our lives our first child, Jennie Rebecca. She was just lovely, and we were very happy being her parents. I sometimes had to pinch myself that I could be so content in my life.

A year after Jennie was born, we all moved to Dover-Foxcroft, Maine, where Mike was transferred. This was a very quiet town, and we felt very much welcomed and at home living there. In February 1980, our second child, Katie Marie, was born. Life was moving along nicely, and we were living a very happy life together.

Along our journey we made other moves – to Wallingford, Conn., and our final destination, Easthampton, Mass. Mike changed companies and became the manager of a local Stop and Shop Store in the western Massachusetts area. I was





very proud of him and his abilities. Our family was growing together in the Lord, and we were involved in our local church. I was thanking the Lord for the opportunity to be married to Mike and have these beautiful daughters.

I had noticed in January 1991 that Michael was not looking very well. He had a grayish look about him and his eyes were sort of bulgy. I was beginning to be concerned for his health, but he assured me that all was well. He had a lot of stress on him, which would contribute to him looking that way. I accepted that answer but kept a watch on him. Mike started working a lot of hours, and even went in to work on his days off. I was impressed with his dedication but sad to have him away from home so much.

In May 1991, I was bringing up a load of laundry and the phone was ringing. As I answered it, the voice on the other end informed me that my husband was having an affair with Phyllis, the bakery manager (Later, as I began healing from this pain, I realized that he had always wanted to "have his cake and eat it too.").

Life, as I had known it, was over. I worked very hard to keep my marriage, but Mike, after finally admitting to his affair, decided that he did not want to stay with me, and he opted to leave our home. We had been married for 17 years, and the love of my life was gone.

How do you handle life when someone else makes your choices? I knew that my choice would have been to get some counseling – someone to guide us – and make our marriage work. It would have been my choice for my children to have their Daddy live in their home with them, but Michael made his choices and, inevitably, made ours also.

When divorce hits your home, it is like a bomb going off. There are shattered pieces all over the place, and the broken hearts don't know how to



start healing. I will never forget my child Katie, who was 11 years old when her father left, crying in her bed in the middle of the night. When I went in to comfort her, she was in my arms asking, "Now that Daddy's gone, who will protect us?" Of course, I assured her that Jesus was ever present with us, and that he would always be there to protect us, but that child, in that lonely moment, wanted her Daddy.



As I loved my children and became both mother and father to them, and worked at giving them a happy and stable home, my theme verse became Joshua 24:15 – "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It doesn't matter if you have a husband or a daddy in the home to claim this verse; it means that I was able to claim some of Mike's choices that had affected the girls and me, and claim it in the name of Jesus. No one can destroy what God put together, and even though Michael had chosen to leave, I still had two lovely gifts that were given to me, and we were making a decision to serve the Lord and be a home.

Life went on for us. The girls graduated from high school; Jennie married her high school sweetheart, Jeremy; and a year and a half after their marriage, little Jon (Jack) was born into their lives. God had been just wonderful to me and supplied all of my needs, and even granted the desires of my heart. I had no man in my life, and that was okay. It would be God's will if it ever happened, and until that time, I was serving the Lord as I had committed to do.

Mike and Phyllis had married after four years of living together. I decided that I needed to forgive them so that I could move on in my life. I didn't want to become a bitter old lady that had been hurt so terribly that I had no joy in my life. I asked Jesus to forgive them for hurting me, and moved on, or so I thought.

In August 1999, I met my second husband, Jim Nicoll. He was a gift from God, and we were married in January 2000. Jim's first wife, Nancy, had died of a massive heart attack 7 years earlier. He had been alone, and I had been alone, and when we met, we both knew that God had placed us together. Jim met my "requirement" list, and first and most importantly, he loved Jesus as his Savior. I knew that I would be able to trust him as long as he loved the Lord.

It was two months after our wedding, on a Saturday morning, when Jim asked me when I was going to forgive Mike and Phyllis. I informed him that I was all set, and that had been taken care of a few years ago. Jim looked at me, and said, "Yes, that is all good, but when are you going to really forgive them?" I was not happy with him, and left the room to go upstairs. I was not going to eat my bagel with him; he obviously didn't know me very well at all!

But as I was walking up the stairs to our bedroom I was hit with the thought, "What if he is right? What if there is more that I need to do?" So I went downstairs. Jim was in the living room, and I started to cry, and I asked him, "How? How do I forgive with my heart?"

Jim motioned for me to come over to him, and we knelt by the couch. We prayed together, and then I prayed and asked Jesus to please take the bitterness, the heartache, the betrayal, and the broken trust away, and replace it with his love for me.

I also took that moment to thank Jesus that Phyllis loved my grandson as she did, and that she was able to be a part of his life.

I knew that I had prayed earnestly since what I forgave was huge. I felt an incredible peace this time. I believe that forgiveness is a process. Marion Damon once told me that we have to "will to forgive."

> Many times things happen to us that we will never have answers for. ... But when we are faithful to God, and his will for our lives, we will always know joy.

A few years after that experience of forgiveness, Jennie called me on the phone and asked if I would pray for Phyllis. She had just been told she had cancer, and it looked very serious. I was able to pray for Phyllis and mean it – to ask the Lord to touch her life in a very real way and to heal her. I was grateful for that.

A few months after getting that initial phone call regarding Phyllis's health, I was shopping at the Christian bookstore with Katie, and I found myself in the back of the store looking at books on cancer and Christianity. My concern was that Phyllis didn't know Jesus, and if she were not going to make it, it would be important for her to know where she would spend eternity. I bought a book for her, and I kept it by my seat in the car waiting for the time that God would reveal for her to get this book.

On Christmas Eve morning, at 8:05, as I was heading to Rochester, N.H., to spend the holiday with my parents, my blinker went on and my car headed down the road to Mike and Phyllis's house. I told the Lord, "You have to be kidding – today?" I explained to God that there were going to be two ground rules that I asked him to respect. Number one: I am not going in the house. Number two: there will be no touching. I did not believe that was too much to ask. After all, I was going on a mission for him.

It was pouring down rain this Christmas Eve morning, and as I pulled the hood of my sweatshirt over my head I ran on the walkway to the front stoop and rang the doorbell. No one answered. As I looked around for something to put the book in so that I could leave, the front door opened, and there stood Phyllis in her robe, with her mouth opened in total surprise. I didn't know what to say, so I said, "What did you want, Santa Claus?" She just stared at me, so I presented this book to her talking all the while like I was on fast speed. When I was finished with my presentation, I noticed I was in the living room. Rule number one had been broken. Then as I looked at her I noticed she was crying, and she just kept saying, "You don't understand." She was right; I didn't. But God did, and he sent me to her that day. As I slowed down long enough to take in her emotions, my own emotions swept over me, and I took her in my arms and held her as she cried. There goes rule number two! As I told her that God loved her, and that I hoped she would find comfort in the book, I wished her a Merry Christmas and left.

I got in my car and started to sob, and I cried all the way to the Massachusetts Turnpike. I call them "healing tears." It is only God that could equip me to take in my arms and comfort the woman who had hurt me so badly. God will not ask us to do anything that he will not equip us to do.

> It is only God that could equip me to take in my arms and comfort the woman that had hurt me so badly.

In January we were holding our Christmas cantata at our church. We had had so many storms in December that it was postponed until then. Mike and Phyllis came to hear the girls sing in the cantata. After the program, I went to Phyllis and welcomed her, and this time she took me by the hands. She told me that on Christmas Eve morning, it took her so long to answer the door because she was up

in her bed asking God, "What do I do with Becky?" Having cancer, Phyllis was not sure of her destiny, and she was working on getting some things in her life in order. I was one of them.

I will never believe it was a coincidence that I had bought that book for Phyllis three weeks earlier, and held onto it until God's divine time to give it to her. How amazing it is to me, that at the very same time I was ringing her doorbell, she was wrestling with God about what to do with me! God's timing is perfect.

After that occasion, Jennie called again and asked me if I would bring Phyllis, Mike and her family a meal, as they were not eating well, and Phyllis was in the middle of chemotherapy. I made a roast dinner and brought it to them.



Mike and Phyllis discovered a need for God in their lives, and started coming to our church (Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church, in Springfield, Mass.). I was up on the stage singing with the worship team when they came for the first time. My immediate thought was, "How many people get to worship with two husbands?"

Much prayer went up for Phyllis, and after a very long haul with cancer, she has been declared cancer free. We praise the Lord for that.

Many times things happen to us that we will never have answers for. Divorce is what I have had to live with. I will never know the answers about why my husband left me for another woman. But when we are faithful to God, and his will for our lives, we will always know joy. We get hung up on having to have answers instead of trusting in the One who is the Answer.

And when we are faithful to the command in Ephesians 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"* – we will know peace.

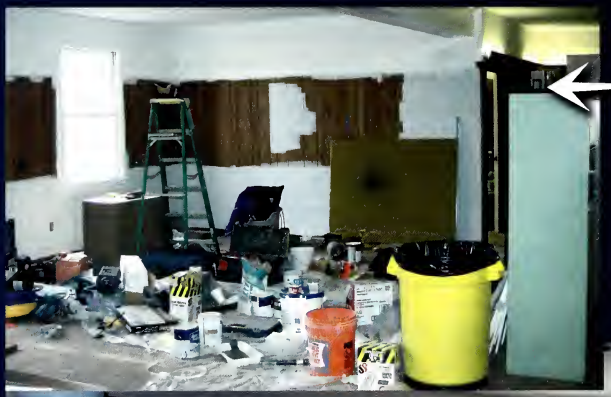
I never had a grandstand ceremony where Mike and Phyllis were informed that I forgave a wound that had cut my very soul. In fact, except for my actions, they have never been told what took place in my living room in March 2000, with my dear husband Jim by my side. But if I had not listened and I had walked away, I would always wonder, "Would Phyllis have had the opportunity to know Jesus?" I thank God that I made the commitment, with my children, that no matter what life gave us, we would stay fast and "serve the Lord."

Many have said to me, "That must not have been very easy for you to do." I reply to them that when God sends you on a mission, he will equip you in every way to do his work.

The freedom and peace that you receive upon true forgiveness is nothing this world can offer you.

Forgiveness is not a choice; it is a lifeline. We need to remember to let go of the pain and the hurt that has consumed our beings and trust them to one who "knows our name."✞

Rebecca Nicoll is the President of the Eastern Regional WH&FMS. She lives in Easthampton, Mass., with her husband of six years, Jim Nicoll. They share five children and eight grandchildren.



From This to *THIS*



Venture Bookstore is improving. In order to better serve our customers, we are renovating our store in Charlotte, N.C. Through a generous gift given anonymously, a portion of the national office building is being transformed into retail space. The new facility will feature popular Christian titles, children's and women's books, Bibles and Advent Christian works.

Venture Bookstore also has a new website (www.venturebookstore.com). Remember, all profit from Venture Bookstore supports Advent Christian ministries. Anyone buying from us not only purchases quality material, but also helps equip God's people in Advent Christian ministries around the world.

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Why Men *Hate* Going to Church

Plus

Overcoming the Crisis-Driven Church
Part 3

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From the Editor



"Be a man!" I've sometimes heard these words when faced with a challenge I wasn't feeling ready for. My first reaction to that expression was, "How can a man do anything *but* 'be a man'?"

I also struggle with that expression on an emotional level. I never had much of a male role model for most of my teen years. My father died when I was 13. My sister was 11; my brother not quite 4. At my dad's funeral, a well-meaning friend tried to encourage me by saying, "Well, you're 'the man of the house' now!" My reaction was, "No, I'm not! And I never will be, either!"

Many boys who lose a dad find a needed role model in an older brother, uncle, grandfather, or coach. I had no older brother; uncles lived far away; one grandfather had already died; the other was slowly dying of a long-term illness; and I wasn't involved in sports. So, there was no one to show me how to "be a man" till I was old enough to actually be one.

What ***is*** a **man**, anyway? Here's the first reference to "man" in the Bible:

"And God said, 'Let us make **man** in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over

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A WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE BIG GUYS

By Rev. Dave Ross

"I know that little eyes are watching ... So, Lord, you've just got to make me a better man!" Listening to one of our guys pray these impassioned words one Sunday evening not long ago, I thought, "So, it's come to this, has it? Thank you, Jesus!"

It began in the heart of God, but from our perspective at Fellowship Church in Taylorsville, N.C., it went back to the day last winter when I picked up a book from the discount shelf at one of our local Christian bookstores and began to browse through its pages. The book, by Rick Bundschuh, was self-described as "A call for a Christian rite of passage to guide boys into godly manhood." Its title was "Passed Thru Fire." The author is a lifelong churchgoer, but his critique of the way we Americans tend to do church these days can be extremely pointed and uncomfortably accurate.

He describes a typical church wherein the men are kind of laid-back and passive, while a core group of women do the "heavy lifting" when it comes to many areas of church life, and especially children's ministry. The problem is that these women have

never been boys, and boys don't learn the same way that girls do. The goal often becomes to control, corral, and quiet the boys, so that at least the girls can learn something.

The bottom line is this: boys will best learn to grow up into Christian manhood from being around Christian men. Everywhere we look boys are craving the leadership of men, taking their cues from watching the men in their life (whether those men are aware of their impact as role models or not). In a society where the majority of boys are now growing up in a home without their biological dad, the need for intentional male role models has never been more acute.

As I read Bundschuh's book, I could see the boys of our church and neighborhood on page after page. It reminded me of perhaps the most significant disciple-making need in our church. The Apostle Paul once admonished Pastor Titus: "Encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:6-8a). I started passing the book around to some of the guys in our church (a real challenge, as most men don't read many books). As I did so, I prayed and asked the guys to read at least certain designated chapters. Then a miracle began to happen — most read more — so I went back to the bookstore and bought all nine copies that they had in stock (Not a big deal; remember, they were on the discount shelf.).

The bottom line is this: boys will best learn to grow up into Christian manhood from being around Christian men.

We scheduled a breakfast to get the guys together for a discussion. Men will come to breakfast, especially if there's enough grease involved. A week or so before the breakfast, "Newsweek" magazine came out with a cover story on "The Boy Crises," * basically telling how boys are falling behind at every level of our educational system largely because: a) the system is designed mostly by and for girls (i.e., unless you're in sports there are few opportunities to learn via aggressive activity), and b) an ever increasing number of boys have no positive male role model at home. About 20 guys showed up for our breakfast, more than half of whom had read at least sections of the book. God began a movement that morning.

Fellowship Church once had an official men's ministry, but it had disbanded due to declining interest shortly before I arrived as pastor in 2003. One of my regrets was that I never got to be part of it. Since that time, we realized that if ever we were to have a dynamic men's ministry which would be in any measure self-sustaining, it would have to be strongly purpose-driven. Over these past few months, the Lord has given us such a purpose: to help the boys of our church and community grow up into Christian manhood.

To that end, we've begun meeting weekly with a volunteer strategy team of six to eight guys. Almost every time we meet, we eat (seems to work for us), either at the church, a local restaurant or in one of the guys' homes. We're doing mostly dreaming and praying at this point. Already we've taken some of the boys to a local hobby car race night. Next week a bunch of us are taking some boys to a Hickory Crawdads game (our local minor league baseball team). On Memorial Day, we plan to show a classic John Wayne war movie, then take the boys over to the cemetery to decorate the graves of some military veterans. It's time these boys learned something about real heroes.

As I've intentionally taken the time lately to begin building relationships with a few of the neighborhood boys at the basketball court out behind the church, I've been learning a couple of things: a) that "knock-out" (a favorite local basketball diversion) can be much tougher and tiring than it looks from the sidelines; and b) that the boys in our community are crying out for men to spend some time with them. "Lord, how could I have been so blind, so busy with church stuff not to notice?" Well, these young guys are not blind. Little eyes are always watching ... "so Lord, you've just got to make me a better man!"✞

* "Newsweek," January 30, 2006

Rev. David Ross is pastor of the Bethlehem AC Church in Taylorsville, N.C.

I Miss My Dad

By Dr. David C. Alves

His birthday was August 22. In two days he would have been 80, I think. I don't even know what year he was born, so I'm not sure without asking my mom. We were just getting close again when he died.

Dad and I were inseparable when I was little, and dad and I were closer again in his last years, but there were many years in between, from college on, when I was not interested in a relationship with my parents. It was too painful, though I tried most with dad.

Right around the time of their breakup, mom called me in Boston to confront me with my father's behavior — the results of her meticulous sleuthing. She had motel receipts, phone records, dates, times, gas receipts, odometer readings. She had even followed him one night. I couldn't listen. I swore at her, and in so many words told her she was sick. I didn't want to hear these things about my father, and I didn't want to enter into my mother's bitterness and anger.

Mom drew a line in the sand for me when she issued the ultimatum: "You are either for your dad or for me. What will it be?"

"I can't make that choice. You are adults and have made your choices. I want a relationship with BOTH of you."



She answered, "If that's the way you see it, then you have made your choice."

She didn't talk to me, or have a relationship with me, for about 10 years following that conversation. She didn't even respond to my wedding invitation or try to get to know my wife. I tried to send cards or gifts. After I came to Christ, I wrote a letter confessing my insensitivity and asking forgiveness for some of the horrible ways I had spoken to her in those tough days. Mom's final blow came by way of my adoption papers as a Christmas gift to my dad, with her name crossed out in all the official places or something to that effect. I'm not sure why dad showed me those papers that mom had sent.

After all, whose fault was it that they got the divorce after 27 years of marriage? It wasn't ours. It takes two in a relationship. It is NEVER just one person's fault. They smashed us with their selfishness. They both took a self-centered stand.

He needed more affirmation as a man. That's what mom said years later as we talked about those impossible years. Reflecting, she said, "He

always felt insecure. He never felt like he measured up. Maybe it was because he was Portuguese. That always bothered him, no matter how many business awards he got or no matter what I said to him. He never felt he measured up."

I couldn't believe she was talking about the same man who taught me that success in this life was just doing your best. "Son, do your best. That's all that matters. That's all anyone can ask. Do your best!" I can still hear him.

I think mom was right about this idea of insecurity because one day, while sitting on his back deck overlooking the Bass River in South Yarmouth, we had a quiet talk.

"Dad, why didn't you teach me and Ken and Dorothy (my brother and sister) to speak Portuguese? You spoke it all the time on Sunday at Voh's (my Grandmother) and on the phone with your clients."

He gazed off across the river at the carpeted greens of the golf course. "Well, I'm not sure. Maybe I just wanted to put that behind me."

"Behind you ... what do you mean? You didn't like the language?"

"Son, you can never know what it's like to grow up in a country where you're considered an outsider, squeezed into an end of town and labeled. I grew up in the 'Portuguese Section.' Sometimes they called it 'Little Lisbon.' I know that my friends didn't mean it, but it hurt to be called a 'dumb Portagee.' I now know that I shouldn't have been, but I was embarrassed about the thick accents my father and mother had. I would try to keep my friends away from my house. If my parents were in public, I tried to avoid them. I somehow thought that it would change when I got back from the war and everyone could see that I had served well, but it didn't. Nowadays, it might seem strange to you that I wanted no part of my cultural background, but in the forties and fifties, it was different. Today's level of acceptance wasn't there. We were in houses built by the Ludlow Mills. I always felt I was the 'dumb Portagee from Franklin Street.' That's why I reacted to that term so strongly when I heard you or anyone else use it. That's why I didn't teach my kids the language."

Mom was right. He was embarrassed and felt "second-class" all his life, even with all his successes and many friends. None of us, including mom, could understand what dad must have felt like as a kid growing up in "Little Lisbon."

When we violate love and trust, we hurt everyone around us and we hurt ourselves in the long run. My dad would do it differently today if he could.

Yet with all this, my dad was a delightful, fun-loving person. I remember NEVER being ashamed to bring my friends home to meet him. They loved him. I began to suspect that some of my friends came over to my house after school just to be with my dad. I didn't envy him though. I was simply proud of him. I was thrilled to have a dad like him.

At the adult parties they had weekly, he entertained with his ukulele and later his four-stringed something — more than a uke but less than a guitar. The strains of the old songs floated up from the rumpus room every Friday night. "Yes sir, she's my baby; no sir, I don't mean maybe;

yes sir, she's my baby now." Or "shine on, shine on harvest moon, up in the sky."

In those days, they were partners. Dad entertained and got the party rolling. Mom loved being "the hostess with the mostest." Everything had to be perfect. Enough ice, enough food, served at the right time. Keeping all the nut bowls full, the pretzel baskets. And not just at parties.

Dad handled the household and auto maintenance. He brought home the cheesecake. He taught us to throw and catch a ball and included us in household chores. Mom handled the domestic issues — groceries, décor, meals, bills, kids' medical and clothing needs, and so on. Perhaps feminists would cringe, but it worked for them ... and for us — at least for a time.

Who knows why these things happen? When I asked mom if there was anything she regretted through their breakup, she said, "I probably should have forgiven him ... but I just couldn't."

Before he died he said that he regretted how he treated mom. "She didn't deserve what I put her through."

"I probably should have forgiven him," she said.

My wife, Marcy, said, "I think your dad and mom still really love each other. But they just can't see their way out of the choices they've made. Your mom married John after your dad married Jackie. But I don't think that either of them is happy. It's really sad."

It felt worse than sad to Ken, Dorothy, and me. It was a smashing of our reality. It crushed the dream that two people could love each other all of their lives. To this day, my brother has not married. He's 51 and lives with my mom. Dorothy and I both believe that their breakup changed Ken's world. My brother lost the zest for life that he used to have and became extremely insecure about who he is.

Dorothy can't really enjoy any memories about my dad. It's too painful to go there. The one scene that plays over and over for her is when dad, remarried, visited her in Florida and wanted to see his granddaughters. Dorothy and dad hadn't spoken in many years as a result of the pain he had caused my mom. Then he asked Dorothy why she kept her girls from him, and she said that he was really a grandfather to someone else's kids. I recall Dorothy saying, "It ended for me when one of Jackie's kids, trying to be a peacemaker between me and dad, said, 'You know, your father is such a wonderful grandfather to my kids.' I never went to visit them again."

What pain we cause others when we make choices to make ourselves comfortable! When we violate love and trust, we hurt everyone around us and we hurt ourselves in the long run. My dad would do it differently today if he could. So would my mom.

I read this to Marcy just after writing it. To my amazement, when I got to the part of dad's regret at hurting my mom and mom's unwillingness to forgive him, I couldn't read any further. Emotions of grief overwhelmed me so that I couldn't talk or see the page through my tears. The pain and sadness of the dream smashed was too much. The heartbreak of their divorce, and the sadness of a life that didn't have to end the way it did, welled up from inside. I never knew how deeply I felt about my dad (and mom) and their breakup. I think something happened inside me when I wrote about dad that enabled me to forgive him for the pain it caused us. I know I had forgiven him intellectually, as a choice, but I don't think I was in touch with all the emotion and pain that resulted from their divorce — and his death.

I believe that perhaps now I am reconciled to the past and can accept my dad as a man and a well-meaning but imperfect father. It seems as though now I will be free to carry on as a dad to my daughter, Tammy, and as a son to my Heavenly Father.✞

Remembering Jimmy

By Miriam Snow Priebe



Jimmy is not his real name, but he was a real boy whom we knew very well many years ago. This morning, at breakfast, Charles mentioned his name and we had a long talk as we remembered his short life.

Our church had a very large Sunday school at the time we met Jimmy. The school had grown a great deal, and that year we started a new system, which was highly recommended, of having two teachers for every class. The idea was that one would do the teaching while the other would record what went on in the class and what the responses of the pupils were. It was a good idea, but it made staffing the Sunday school very difficult. It is always hard to find just the right person for each age group; to find two such people who could work well together presented a real challenge. We did a lot of praying and somehow, with God's help, we got the 14 teams of two, and found places for every group to meet. I visited the classes regularly to see how the new system was working.

The most successful and creative teachers were those who were married couples, although some who were not did very well. Often the married couples took interest in the children during the week and even invited them into their homes. Our school grew a great deal that year. We also had weekly teachers' meetings, which turned out to be exciting and worthwhile.

The couple who seemed to be doing the best job had a class of all boys ages 10 and 11. I don't remember the reason for having that particular class just for boys, but Charles and I were very impressed at the enthusiasm of the students who were bringing their friends to join the

class, which Mr. and Mrs. Allen taught. The secret was that the teachers really loved their pupils. Into this class came Jimmy with a friend.

Jimmy had never been to Sunday school before and would have been elected, if there had been such an election, as the boy least likely to come to church. The home from which he came had lots of people in it. There were two family groups there, and Jimmy represented a third family where there were no parents. I believe it was a loving group of people in that home, but there was no way that it could be described as an ideal home.

Early in the year Jimmy was not in class one Sunday. When the teachers inquired about his absence, Jimmy's buddy said that he had a bad cold. That news required some action on the part of the teachers. Usually it was the custom to send out a little get well card saying, "You have been missed" or something like that. Most of the teachers were very conscientious about that. They were all busy people, but they took their jobs seriously. However, Mr. and Mrs. Allen went the second mile. They took a bouquet of flowers to Jimmy.

A large group of "family" gathered to watch as Jimmy came downstairs to receive the visitors. His eyes opened wide as he saw the flowers. "Are they for me?" he asked. "Nobody ever brought me flowers!" Others in the family nodded and exclaimed at the gift. Charles and I were astounded and pleased. After that experience, nothing would have kept Jimmy from Sunday school, and about that time the rest of the family started coming to church.

His Sunday school teachers reported at teachers' meetings about what a great addition Jimmy made to their class. Mrs. Allen said, "He is always grateful for any little kindness that is shown him. He probably has less than any boy in our class, but he is glad for what he has. He is grateful for the families that took him in when he had no family. He is glad to be in our class! When we talked to the boys about what Jesus had done for us, Jimmy was the first to say that he was thankful to have a Savior like Christ!"

Years passed. We got to know Jimmy and his "family" very well. They had a lot of hard times and troubles. School work was difficult for Jimmy, and he struggled to keep going. The time was in the 60s and people were agonizing over the war. Families were divided and young men were deciding what to do. Almost immediately after he graduated from high school, Jimmy joined the army. It was what he wanted to do. He came home once after basic training, proud of his uniform and grateful to be in the Armed Forces. Then he was shipped out to Vietnam. Within a month, he was killed.

Jimmy was one of the first soldiers in our little community to be killed. At our church, people were devastated. His body was shipped home, and a great crowd of people came out for his funeral at our church. It was like losing one of our own children. It was a difficult service for Charles to conduct.

In the little cemetery behind the church, Jimmy was given the full military graveside service. There were the gun salutes and the folded flag handed to a grieving member of Jimmy's "family." Over at one side I saw the Allens, who were crying; so was I, and so were most of the people there. A friend standing near me whispered, "This is the most beautiful thing that ever happened to Jimmy! I can imagine Jimmy saying, 'Is this all for me?'"

Well, that is the story of Jimmy. He taught us all what gratitude is all about. We are looking forward to seeing him again, and it will be a great reunion. ✞



PAINTERS AND STREET SWEEPERS

by Fred Honeycutt

Thoughts from a recent mission trip to Honduras



Yesterday as we were painting the walls in the room and hall area at the new clinic in the small city of Macuelizo, Santa Barbara, Honduras. Pastor John Harper (from the Advent Christian Village), looked up and noticed that the metal beams (holding the roof on and the walls together) were smudged with plaster drippings and white paint that were used for the base coat all over the inside of the clinic. "It would be a shame to put all the work in the walls and leave these beams as they are. Why don't we touch them up and clean up the lines between the wall and the beams?"

The sharp contrast between the canary yellow walls and the rust brown beams *did* seem to highlight the overruns and spills of white on the beams, I thought. As this task involved considerable climbing, I volunteered and began to dutifully scrape the plaster drippings and replace the area with a generous coat of rust brown. My first actions were to paint only what one could see from the floor — to "hit the high spots." Having to get on the top rungs of a tall stepladder to paint the beams resurrected a thought from my cranial archives: Michelangelo — the way he painted the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, flat on his back, painting Biblical characters, high in the air, but detailing every one of them as if they were to be framed and put on display. These works were meant to be seen from a distance, so why the detail? "Why not just cover what could be seen from the floor?" I argued with myself.



Then I thought of a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "If your lot in life is to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, as if you were sweeping the very streets of gold. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven will have to pause and say: Here lived a street sweeper who swept his job well."

I thought of the apostle Paul as he encouraged the readers of Colossians 3:23: "In whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man."

As I was climbing down the ladder preparing to move to another spot, an unpainted smudge of white way back in the corner (where no one could see) caught my eye.

I climbed back up that ladder and stretched to cover this "hidden" spot. After all, *I'm working for the King of Kings, the Prince of Glory — God Himself.* I'm painting the shelter that covers his ministers of mercy and grace to the least of these. To me, that is *my* Sistine chapel!✝


ROAD
CLOSED

Overcoming Crisis-driven church

Part 3: Subversive Discord: Tongues, Tales & Triangles

By Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

Once upon a time, a man who had been stranded on a deserted island for 15 years was rescued. As they were leaving, the pilot of the helicopter noticed three buildings on the island. Out of curiosity, he asked the man about the buildings. The first building, the man declared, "is my house." And, the building over there "is where I go to church." Noticing that there was one more building on the island, the pilot asked, "What about the building way over there?" "Oh," said the man, "that's where I used to go to church!" Talk about conflict! It can't get much worse than not being able to get along with oneself!

Recently, as I was speaking with a man about a problem that had occurred in his church, he asked me, "Can't we all just get along?" Apparently not; according to a recent survey conducted by Thom Ranier in his newest book, "Breakout Churches,"[1] 171 of the 172 problems identified in the churches surveyed were problems concerning issues between other Christians. According to Ranier, the health of a local church is largely dependent upon its ability to work through the problems that go on between believers. Unfortunately, many churches give up the fight and grow weary of the struggle. On the other hand, healthy churches have a track record that demonstrates their commitment to persevering.

Someone once said that conflict in the church is neither good nor evil — only inevitable. After 30 plus years of pastoral experience, I would go one step further and say that a church without conflict is probably a *dead* church. The idea that a healthy church is one that is trouble-free misses the point entirely. The church needs tension if it is to grow. Tensions come from conflict and, if dealt with appropriately, can signal good things for the future. A noted Christian psychologist states, "The difference between spiritual and unspiritual community is not whether or not conflict exists, but is rather in our attitude toward it and our approach to handling it.[2]



WHAT'S IN YOUR CUP?

The church often behaves similarly to a husband and wife within the relationship of marriage. For example, the wife gets her feelings hurt for some reason but chooses not to make it a big deal. Her solution is to stuff the hurt in an emotional cup. The idea of an emotional cup was popularized by Dr. David Ferguson in his book, "Intimate Encounters." Ferguson writes, "A cup filled with positive emotions will overflow with love, joy, and peace — the fruit of the Spirit. But a cup filled with unhealthy emotions such as bitterness, resentment, anger, guilt, fear, and anxiety will cause symptoms of stress and prevent you from feeling positive emotions."[3]

The practice of stuffing our feelings into an emotional cup is not unique to the family. People in the church have practiced this method of handling their problems for years. Quite often, a particular person or family will be identified as the source of a problem in a church, but it is probably more accurate to say the church as a whole has not developed a method of dealing with conflict that moves toward resolution, resulting in a subversive way of reacting to the problem at hand. Many folks who have a problem with a pastor or another person in the church will hold on to the problem until something happens that ignites their anger.

Unfortunately, even though these feelings are stuffed into an emotional cup, there are ways in which the rumbling in the cup makes its way to the surface prior to eruption. The source of these feelings and attitudes come from deep within the fabric of what makes a church a church. Everyone is influenced by their environment or context in which they live. It is no different in the church. Each person responds to conflict largely due to the influence of their family of origin and, in the case of the church, their church of origin. The shaping power of one's experience in the family and in the church can be tremendous.

A person may be impacted by a variety of contexts of influence that exist within the church such as *historical, familial, pastoral, theological and geographical/sociological.*[4] By describing an imaginary person, one can gain a sense of what one who has been influenced by the various contexts might look like in a local church. Each person, of course, would look a little different, due to the various degrees of influence upon the person by the different contexts. I like to call this person IMA STUCK. Below is a brief description:

IMA has been in the church for many years. In fact, she was raised in the church from the time of in-

fancy. Her grandmother was the one who began the cradle roll program and today the nursery is named in her honor. Her great-great-grandfather was the founding pastor of the church and his grandson, IMA's father, is an elder in the church today. Everyone looks to IMA's dad as the patriarch of the church. If he's in favor of an idea, then most people will follow through on it.

IMA's family has a lot of influence in the church today, especially since most of the church is STUCK too! If you're not a STUCK, it's a good possibility that you are married to one. The church hasn't grown much over the years except for all of the little STUCKS being born. Ever since the split in 1965, not too many UNSTUCK people have joined the church, which means it's like one big family.

Going against the family isn't a wise thing to do, even if you're the pastor. Oh, you might be able to make some progress, but if you fight it too much you will be looking for a new church. Most of the pastors either went along with the opinion of the family or they just kept it to themselves. Any attempt to change things would be met with stiff resistance.

The one thing IMA liked about her church was that she knew what to expect. Everybody dressed the same and thought the same way about most subjects. They read from the same kind of Bible and sang the same songs that their grandparents had sung 50 years ago. Nothing new was tried in this church. They knew their theology, which they called "old time religion," and no one was going to show them anything different. If you didn't like what you heard at IMA's church, you could always go to another one.

Yes, IMA's church was a fixture in the community. It had been there for many, many years. The sad thing is that most of the community didn't know anything about the church, and the people in the church knew very little about the community. They were just STUCK right there on the corner of Church Street, content to just be there. Not many people cared that the church was there, nor ever felt the impact of the church in their lives. As far as the church was concerned, that was just fine for them.

IMA no longer attends the church as she died last year, but don't worry — there are many others just like her who are coming along to take her place.

Many pastors have found themselves in similar situations with little hope of change taking place. It would appear that there are basically two options available when a leader finds himself in this type of situation: 1) give up on the church and leave, or 2) remain in the church in order to confront the problem, and hope that your effort will lead to a discovery or creation of a satisfactory resolution for everyone involved.

THE REAL DEAL

Not every church is plagued by a domineering patriarch or matriarchal figure, or even a family that has been around for a hundred years. Yet few churches are growing and developing in the way that the Bible prescribes. What could be the problem? If the evidence is not readily seen, it is likely that there is something going on behind the scene that is causing the lack of growth.

Since the family of origin is such a powerful force in the development of a person's character, it is a likely place to begin when looking for answers to one's problems. Parents are notorious for meaning well, but quite frankly we, too, violate a basic principle when we simply pass on what our parents did to us as being right. The failure to help our children make wise choices has led us in the world of the church to the point where we do not know how to deal with conflict in a way that brings resolution.

If a child has never been taught how to listen or to carefully weigh all of his options when confronted by a problem in life, it is unlikely that he or she will behave any differently when they grow older. They will inevitably want it their way, which is the

way they were taught, and resist any other options. Frank Martin suggests in his book, "*War in the Pews: A Foxhole Guide to Surviving Church Conflict*," that selfishness is the motivating factor in the hearts of church people who live life in this way.[5] Unfortunately, the situation is made worse by the fact that most people in the church believe they own the organization.

Churches that do not have a simple and proactive way of getting their people to address the problems that surface in their ministries are setting themselves up for failure. There are many reasons that people are unwilling and unable to seek resolutions to their problems, perhaps the greatest being a lack of trust. According to Patrick Lencioni, the author of the popular book, "*Five Dysfunctions of a Team*," people who "... don't trust one another aren't going to engage in open, constructive, ideological conflict. If this happens they will continue to preserve a sense of artificial harmony where people hold back their opinions and honest concerns."[6]

IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP

While all relationships require productive conflict in order to grow, paralysis can come by the need for complete agreement and the ability to move beyond debate. Internal blocks such as denial (not admitting the problem), feelings of inadequacy (can't face the problem) or avoidance (not getting involved) can prevent the church from moving forward in a positive direction. When the church does not openly debate and disagree about important ideas, they often turn to behind-the-back personal attacks, which are far nastier and more harmful than any heated argument over issues. Churches that avoid conflict actually doom themselves to revisiting issues again and again without resolution.

Given today's emphasis upon teamwork, especially in a church that is being controlled by individuals, one can see why conflict would go underground. Quite often, conflict not expressed directly surfaces in other non-productive ways, usually in arguments over peripheral issues. Conflict not expressed and resolved can escalate out of control, with disastrous consequences. According to the late Michael Yaconelli, founder of Youth Specialties, people who major on these petty issues have gone too far.

Petty people are ugly people. They are people who have lost their vision. They are people who have turned their eyes away from what matters and focused, instead, on what doesn't matter. The result is that the rest of us are immobilized by their obsession with the insignificant. It is time to rid the church of pettiness. It is time the church refused to be victimized by petty people. It is time the church stopped ignoring pettiness. It is time the church quit pretending that pettiness doesn't matter ... pettiness has become a serious disease in the Church of Jesus Christ — a disease which continues to result in terminal cases of discord, disruption, and destruction. Petty people are dangerous people because they appear to be only a nuisance instead of what they really are — a health hazard.[7]

THE FIRST STEPS

Entropy is the bodily reaction to heat rising in the body. When this happens the body begins to lose the energy that is available to work. During conflict, energy can be lost when the people involved do not use it for the right reason. The most effective way to insure that this happens is when the church experiences what Thom Ranier calls the ABC moment. The ABC moment can best be described in the following way:

A – Awareness that something is not right in the church.

When a church fails to identify a problem, it usually means that the leadership (and/or church) is engaging in some unsuccessful problem-solving techniques such as ignoring the problem (denial, burying), protecting themselves from the problem (defensiveness, rationalization), retreating (fantasy), blaming (introjection or projection) or nega-

tive transfer (badmouthing others).

B – Belief that something can be accomplished by seeking out and confronting the brutal facts about the church's inadequacies.

To believe means that the church is willing to engage in successful problem-solving techniques and practices, which include exercises such as defining (describing the problem), opting (analyzing causes and listing alternatives), organizing (making a plan), learning (enacting a plan, accepting defeat, learning from defeat), persevering (trying again and again) and motivating (staying on top of emotional, cognitive and behavioral needs). This step accepts the fact that problems are solved by action, not reaction.

C – Crisis means understanding the church's purpose and getting the right people and structure in place so the church can move forward.

The ability to persevere through the handling of a problem will not only build character but identify character. It is not always a bad thing to see how people respond to the presence of conflict. However, the more you handle conflict (hopefully), the better you will get at going through the process. If a problem is allowed to remain unresolved, eventually it will become a crisis. The one good thing about a crisis is that a formerly unresolved problem will get addressed. In the end, the presence of a crisis usually indicates that the techniques and methods being used to deal with the problem are inadequate and lacking, suggesting that new methods are needed.

Once a church has experienced an ABC moment they are able to reframe the issue from an internal, behind-the-scene type of problem to an external problem to be solved. Once the problem becomes a shared problem, each member of the church can work together to find a solution. There is no need to talk around the water cooler or share your thoughts with a person not involved directly in the conflict (triangle). It is correct that conflict occurs when two or more people try to occupy the same space at the same time, especially when their communication is guarded and not honest. However, anything can happen, even resolution, when people are willing to come out from hiding and share their needs and opinions, particularly when both parties are striving for the same purpose: *resolution that advances the work of Christ through his church.* Then, and only then, can discord turn to unity (Ephesians 4:1-3):

> *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* ✞

(Endnotes)

[1] Thom Ranier, "Breakout Churches," (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), p. 192. In this book, built upon the type of study conducted by Jim Collins in his book, "Good to Great," Ranier identifies the characteristics of "Good to Great" churches which he calls "Breakout Churches." Those churches which do not measure up are called "comparison churches."

[2] Larry Crabb, "The Safest Place on Earth" (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1999), p. 40.

[3] David Ferguson, "Intimate Encounters" (Austin, TX: Relationship Press, 2001), p. 17.

[4] Thomas S. Warren II, "The Alexander Antidote" (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 1996), p. 18-25.

[5] Frank Martin, "War in the Pews: A Foxhole Guide to Surviving Church Conflict" (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 152-167. Martin identifies a variety of "peace busters" including: 1)the Me factor; 2)majoring on the minors; 3)legalism; 4)gossip; 5)miscommunication; 6)when tradition becomes doctrine; 7)unchecked immorality; 8)power politics; and 9)doctrinal differences.

[6] Patrick Lencioni "Five Dysfunctions of a Team"

[7] Mike Yaconelli, *The Door 82* (December 1984/ January 1985).

Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren II is serving as director of nurture for Advent General Conference



Why Men *Hate* Going to Church

By David Murrow
(reviewed by ACGC Director of Nurture Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren II)

Thirty-plus years of pastoral ministry will open your eyes to many things, some of which are significant. One such realization that has come my way during this journey is the fact that strong churches have strong men involved in the daily work of the church.

In recent years there have been influences from the outside of the local church attempting to strengthen this part of the ministry such as Promise Keepers. I will never forget my initial PK experience. Many of the men of our church attended with me and I thought, "This is great, *the men are getting serious about the work of the Lord!*" Unfortunately, some of the hopes I had that day about men being involved in the ministry of the church quickly faded.

As a result of this experience, I began to think carefully about the role of men in the life of the church. According to Scripture, the emphasis upon men in the life and ministry of the church is impossible to miss. In a word, the importance of men in the life and ministry of the local church is *mandated.*

As a result, I began to pray and seek God's will regarding how I approached the men of my local church. My desire was that men would find a place to worship, serve and lead in the life of the church like never before. Recently, I read a book that helped me understand the battle that I have been fighting over the past few years as I attempted to live out this mandate in the church. The book is titled, "Why Men Hate Going to Church."

The title alone conjured up some interest on my part. The message of the book was thought-provoking and on target. There are many challenging and relevant thoughts generated by Murrow's book, but allow me to isolate just one: *the loss of the masculine spirit in the life of the church.* Murrow says that the church of today has been shaped more by appealing to the feminine spirit than the masculine spirit.

You may say, "So what?" This is exactly the question Murrow addresses in his book. He believes, as do I, that it does matter. Many of the things that the church pushes as important in terms of identifying with the church and living out your faith are foreign to the everyday man and not very appealing.

Men like competition, hard work and being outdoors, yet most churches try to get men to read, raise their hands in worship, go to Sunday school or sing in the choir. Is it possible that we miss out on a tremendous opportunity to get men involved by avoiding the things they like to do and, more importantly, were created to do?

For this reason, I changed my approach to dealing with men. The men I know are hard workers and have incredible giftedness and skill in their work and hobby world. I have chosen to focus on those things and have seen tremendously blessed results. Murrow's book was very strategic in shaping and sharpening my focus. I heartily recommend it to you as you explore the ministry of men in the life of the local church.

Murrow's book explores the findings of what biology, sociology, and psychology teach us about men, but the Bible also has a lot to say about the importance of men. Jesus, by the way he related to the disciples, is the perfect example of how to work with men. They were "rough around the edges" but were used mightily by God. Someone once asked me, "Do you think the disciples and Jesus sat around the campfire and sang songs?" I doubt it, but I do believe he spent an enormous amount of time out in the boat, which was the world they knew.

Isn't it time to do the same? It is my belief that many men would become active in the life of the church if they knew that they were encouraged to serve him in the way a man thinks and behaves. Murrow's book can help you bring this about. Why not check it out?✞

Available from Venture Bookstore! To order, call 1-800-676-0694, ext. 251 or email venture@acgc.us

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner

Now and then, when a person questions whether government has the right to take a particular action, someone may respond by quoting Jesus' words in Mark 12:17 —

> *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (ESV).*

"Caesar" was the title for the Emperor of Rome at that time, and the Jewish nation was under Roman authority; so "Caesar" stands for governmental authority. No debate about that. However, some who glibly quote the verse imply that governmental leaders should never be resisted, and they may suppose that life is neatly divided into a secular realm (ruled by government) and a sacred realm (ruled by God). Worse yet, in their minds, the sacred realm sometimes ends up including no more than the inner life of individual Christians, and a couple of hours on Sunday morning.

Did Jesus really intend to teach that government has unlimited earthly authority and must always be obeyed?

The context, Mark 12:13-17, describes how some of the Pharisees and Herodians sent messengers to trap Jesus with a question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" This should alert us to expect a very clever, and perhaps evasive, answer from Christ – one that would keep him out of their trap.

If Jesus had answered, "Yes, it's okay to pay taxes to Caesar," he would have lost favor with many Jews who resented Rome and its demands. If he'd said, "No, God's law forbids it," he could get into serious trouble with Roman authorities. Jesus turned the tables on his questioners by saying, "'Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' And they brought one. And he said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to him, 'Caesar's'" (Mark 12:15b-16).

A denarius was a Roman coin. On one side was an image of Caesar's head; on the other, a scene that celebrated his reign.[1] An inscription read, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus."[2] To many Jews, this sounded blasphemous.

When Jesus went on to compare the authority of Caesar with God's authority, he "protested against the false and idolatrous claims made on the coins."[3] So, on one level, Jesus' response could be interpreted this way: "Since Caesar's image is on this coin, and you acknowledge his sovereignty by

"...things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

carrying it, you ought to give your master what he demands."

On a more simplistic level, people could have understood Jesus to mean, "Yes, Caesar is lord of the secular world, so pay your taxes; then, do your spiritual duties to God." Jesus avoided their trap by a statement that could be interpreted more than one way.

Actually, Christ's response was a kind of riddle: When you consider all that actually belongs to God, what exactly *does* belong to Caesar? Psalm 24:1 says, *"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein."* Everything and everyone belongs to God, including Caesar himself. God is Lord (owner and master) of all; no earthly government has any right to demand something of its citizens unless God says it has that right. Governing authorities are called to be God's servants, not secular gods (Romans 13:1-5). They're established to punish evildoers and protect those who do right. If a government protects evildoers and punishes the righteous, it has morphed from being a minister of God into being a monster (cf. Revelation 13:1-10).

Certainly a government may legitimately ask for a reasonable amount of taxes from the citizens who benefit from its services (Romans 13:6-7), and there are other lawful claims that God allows a government to make, such as calling for obedience to laws that have a general moral basis; but if governing authorities make tyrannical claims and oppose God's will, they must be resisted (cf. Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29).

This is part of the reasoning that led some American colonists to declare independence from England and its king, whom they perceived as acting against God's will and their best interests. It has led certain other Christians to refuse to use deadly force when their government wanted to send them to war, either because they thought a particular war was unjust, or that Christians should never kill. It has led other Christians to criticize, protest, or disobey certain laws they believed were immoral.

Whether you or I agree with any of those particular responses is not the point. Such people have, at least, understood that government does not have the right of total lordship over the lives of its citizens. Those who unwittingly twist Jesus' words in Mark 12:17 may be satisfied to justify doing whatever their government demands. Wise and faithful Christian disciples will never be satisfied with that.✝

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1 Reformation Study Bible, p.1439, note on 12:15.
2 Concordia Self-Study Bible, p.1481, note on Matthew 22:19.
3 Ibid., p.1482, note on Matthew 22:21.

Pastor Tom Warner serves with Ministry To The Aged in retirement centers and nursing homes in Boise and Meridian, Idaho.



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Brent Ross

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The God of the Bush

There I was, sitting in a room of my peers, when I learned that I had been appointed to become the Interim President of The Advent Christian General Conference of America. As I drove back home to Georgia on that Saturday afternoon in February, I was flooded with many emotions, one of them being, "Brent, what have you gotten yourself into?" I felt honored, inadequate, stunned and excited. I'm thankful to be a part of the team and very excited about what God is doing through the Advent Christian Church around the world. Even as I write today, plans are underway to plant new churches in many countries. Today several people will become part of the family of God because of Advent Christians like you who are carrying out the Great Commission.

On my drive back to Georgia, I reflected on the first sermon that I ever preached. The title was "Any Old Bush Will Do." The text was from Exodus chapter 3. It is the story of Moses at the burning bush. This is a story you've probably heard many times before. Moses saw a bush in a desert that did not burn up. It was an unusual sight, because there was a fire and no smoke, so Moses decided to take a closer look, and when he did, God spoke to him. God called his name, and Moses said, "Here I am." It is always a good idea to respond that way when God speaks to you. I know that with my new responsibility God has called me out of my comfort zone. Yet I know that if God called me to it, he will bring me through it! God told Moses that he was on holy ground — not because of the bush, but because of the fact that God was there. At the burning bush God reminded Moses that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Isn't it comforting to know that God hasn't changed? The God of our forefathers is our God today.

God said to Moses, "I have seen the misery and suffering of my people, and I have come down to rescue them and to bring them into a land of blessing, a land flowing with milk and honey." I really believe that there is hope for the Advent Christian denomi-

nation. There are some churches that may feel that they are in a desert place right now. I want you to know that God cares about what you are going through, and he is able to turn things around and bring you to a better place. Many of our churches in the United States and in countries around the world are seeing that very thing and are reaping the harvest. We are seeing God do miracles. Our God is an awesome God.

As Moses stood at the burning bush and heard the good news that God was going to do something good for his people, God had something else to say to Moses. "Oh, by the way, Moses, I'm going to use you to deliver my people." Moses' response was to ask, "Who am I?" It was a great question. The answer could have been that Moses was one of the most educated men of his day. It also could have been that Moses was a murderer who didn't speak very well. God's message to Moses that day was this: "It's not about you. You thought there was something special about this bush, but it's not about the bush; it's about the God of the bush." God is the reason this bush didn't burn up. He could have chosen any old bush. It's not about our great abilities; it's about our availability to let God be God.

This has been a liberating message for me. I am just a sinner saved by grace. I approach this new responsibility with a great awareness that on my own I am inadequate for this task, yet I have the peace of knowing that my adequacy comes from Christ. "I can do all things through him who gives me strength." I covet your prayers that God would mold me into the leader he desires me to be. I'm ready to serve! If I can help you in any way, please feel free to call me.

Oh, by the way, are you ready to let God use you? Will you say, "Here I am; use me?" It is not about you or your abilities; it is about making yourself available to let God use you for his glory. May God bless you richly!✞

(Editorial continued)
the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' So God created **man** in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27, KJV).

This tells us several important things about being a "man":

1. Man is "made in the image of God" (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7). An image shares at least some characteristics of what it images. To be a man, therefore, is to be like God in some way. These verses explain in what ways we're somewhat like God.

2. "Let us make man ... let **them** have ..." (v. 26). It was not God's intention for any man to "be a man" all by himself. God intended for him to "be a man" in the context of **relationships** — relationships with God, with other humans, and with the animals God created.

3. "... after our likeness ... **dominion** ..." (v. 26). Here's one way man is "somewhat like God": God is Ruler of the universe, and man is ruler of the earth. To "be a man" is to have **delegated** authority, like an Army General who has officers and soldiers under his command, but who must always report to the Commander-in-Chief.

4. "... male and female ..." (v. 27). Genesis 2 emphasizes how "being a man" is too big a job to accomplish without a "helper." That helper (woman) was just as much "man" (in the generic sense) as the man himself! ("God created man ... male and female ...") I could never "be the man" I am today without the help of the wonderful balancing counterpart God created for me — my wife.

In this issue of the *Witness*, we'll explore several ramifications of the theme, "Masculine Christianity." Be a man! Sit down and read these articles!✞



Color in each area marked with an "x"

Fill in each space with the reflection of the letter below it.

_ _

H O N O R Y O U R F A T H E R

_ .

A N D Y O U R M O T H E R (Exodus 20:12)

Cross out all words that are:

(1). Emotions; (2). Action words; (3). Colors; (4). Animals; (5). Beginning with "w"

Then read the remaining words from left to right

sad	worried	cow
Children	blue	horse
dog	are	a
treasure	white	brown
yellow	jump	from
walk	the	happy
win	was	Lord





As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Word Search — Words from Proverbs 31:10-31 NIV (Wife of noble character)

Cross out these words

beauty
blessed
charm
children
clothed
considers
dignity
faithful
fears
good
household
noble
portions
praises
provides
reward
rubies
strength
wisdom
works

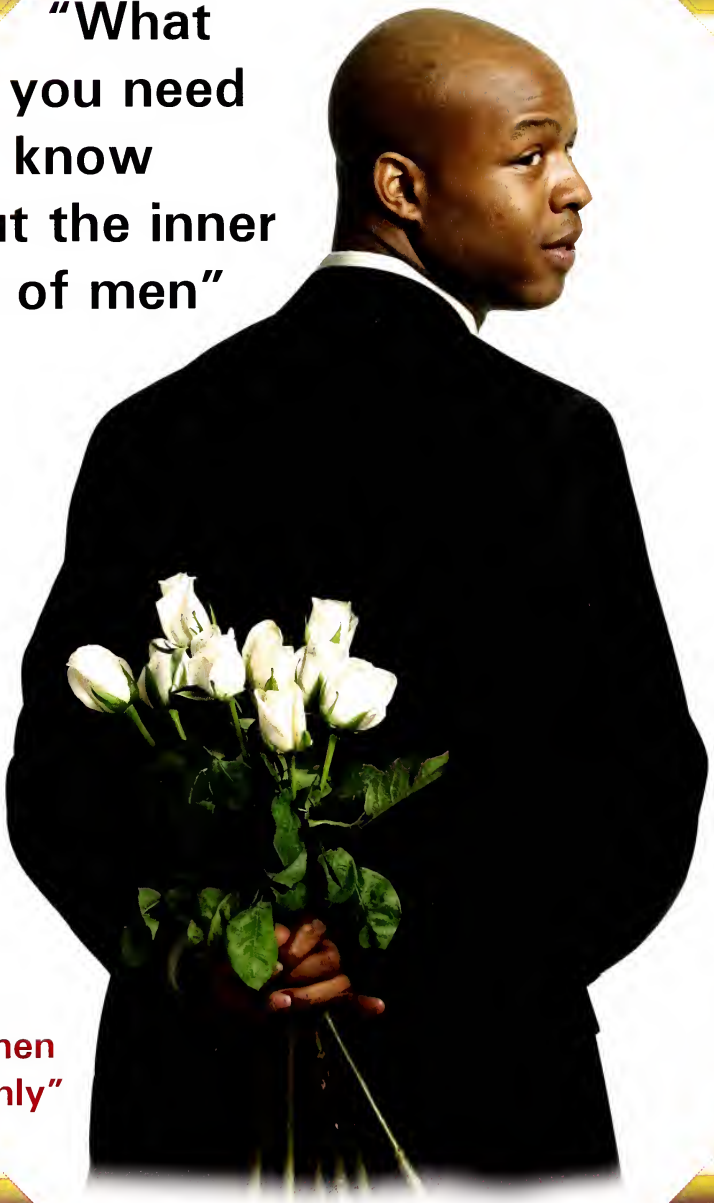
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L	T	B	G	I	N	D	E	T	C	G	B	L	K	I	T
U	I	H	O	U	S	E	H	O	L	D	I	N	S	L	A
F	O	L	T	N	L	E	T	C	O	V	E	W	R	D	Y
H	N	Y	A	B	M	G	S	J	T	F	S	P	E	R	I
T	S	M	O	D	S	I	W	U	H	L	O	T	D	E	W
I	L	N	C	W	G	O	O	D	E	B	V	R	I	N	E
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F	E	O	W	C	H	A	R	M	B	W	I	S	N	O	U
A	S	C	R	L	T	I	H	F	E	M	A	R	O	N	S
P	I	E	Y	K	A	L	W	R	H	G	T	A	C	U	I
G	L	W	O	R	S	M	S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H	R
Y	T	U	A	E	B	L	U	P	F	E	A	R	S	A	C
I	P	R	O	V	I	D	E	S	A	L	T	O	H	N	F

To complete this Bible verse, fill in the blanks with the correct vowels

H_w gr__t _s th_ l_v_ th_ F_th_r h_s l_v_sh_d _n _s, th_t w_ sh__ld b_ c_ll_d ch_ldr_n _f G_d!

I John 3:1

"What you need to know about the inner lives of men"



Find out in Shaunti Feldhahn's new book entitled

"For Women Only"

"THE INSIDE SCOOP"

by Pam Buchanan

It's funny how things can work in tandem. Last summer at a family camp, a pastor friend recommended a book that he thought would be helpful in my new work with Advent Christian Women's Ministries. A few days later, upon returning home from camp, I received a brochure in the mail from a neighboring church. The women of that congregation were hosting a day-event at a local hotel conference room, and the speaker was advertised to be Shaunti Feldhahn. I recognized the name as that of the author of the book recommended by my pastor friend, so I registered to attend the conference.

... she was clueless as to what Doug was thinking, ...

Full of enthusiasm, Shaunti presented herself that day in new clothes (the airline had lost her luggage), and she made some new observations about the inner workings of the men in our lives (boyfriends, husbands, sons, etc.). During the day, I learned that Shaunti wore many hats: best-selling author, nationally-syndicated newspaper columnist, business and marketing consultant, public speaker, wife and mother. She graduated from The College of William and Mary (Virginia) with a Bachelor's degree in Government and Economics, and she holds a Master's degree from Harvard University in Public Policy. Her work experience includes Wall Street and Capitol Hill. Shaunti came to know Christ as her King during her college years and believes it is her mission to equip Christians for ministry to a lost and hurting world. As she worked to fulfill her mission, I was privileged to hear her in person last fall.

The subject of the afternoon was her newest book entitled "**For Women Only**" and subtitled "What you need to know about the inner lives of men." I was very intrigued with the circumstances surrounding the "birth" of this book. She related the story of being in the process of writing her second novel ("**The Lights of Tenth Street**") and feeling the need to do a little research. The contemporary story line looks at the challenges of our sexualized society and attempts to give hope and insight to men and women who feel trapped and to offer them strength in their struggles. The name given to her main character was "Doug." As she was writing this novel, she reported having no

problem recording what Doug was doing, but she realized that she was clueless as to what Doug was thinking, so she decided to do a little "digging." She approached several men in her life – at home, at work, at church, etc. – with a page or two of her rough draft for this story and these instructions: read the pages describing Doug's actions and explain to her what Doug was thinking. The results were eye-opening, and she was so fascinated that she became somewhat addicted to the research. She expanded her interviews, which eventually led her to hire a professional company to survey men from all over the country and every walk of life and nationality.

The results from the professionals, although more extensive and calculating, were astoundingly in agreement with her limited, personal surveys. Shaunti went on to complete her novel (which was released in 2003), and in the process she felt that she had gained so much new insight into the way men think and feel that she desired to compile that research into book form to be shared with other females like herself.

This book, "For Women Only," is a result of the many surveys, conversations and interviews, and it includes chapters on the seven basic revelations Shaunti discovered, such as the importance of respect, the feeling of being vulnerable, the burden to provide, his visual rolodex, basic fears, his spouse's appearance and (of course) a chapter on the importance of intimate times with his wife.

Shaunti was very personal and entertaining as she shared with us that afternoon, and her enthusiasm for the subject was contagious. I was immediately hooked and wanted to read more, and as I did I was amazed at the depth of research and the deeper insights it provided. Even though I have been married for 25 years and have a 20-year-old son, I came away from this read with some valuable "aha's!" Every woman has surely been dumbfounded by something the man in her life has said or done (I know I have!) and has probably walked away shaking her head and wondering what prompted that reaction. This book addresses some of those perplexities, revealing things he wishes she knew but doesn't know how to tell her or things that he is shocked to discover she doesn't already know!

For instance, I was particularly interested in the research concerning a man's "romantic side." I learned that men, in general, really do desire to be spontaneous, to plan a surprise and connect with their mate, but there is a silent fear that they won't do a very good job (like they think the female would). My eyes were opened to the self-doubt and fear of humiliation that could be hampering their launch into creativity. If they should ever give it a try and walked away feeling as if they did not quite measure up, they probably would just "aim low" and "play it safe" the next time. On the other hand, if they were really successful and pulled off a real winner of a romantic evening and felt much rewarded, they then might entertain the fear of never being able to duplicate or "top" that one so they just shut down. As I pondered this, I began to realize just how important my actions and words of encouragement would mean in either scenario.

This is just one example among many of the real eye-openers I gained from my afternoon with Shaunti. In the very last chapter, Shaunti reveals the number one answer men gave to the question,

"What is the one thing that you wish your wife (or significant other) knew, but you feel you can't explain to her or tell her?

By far, the top response was... *"How much I love her!"*

(Did I just hear a collective sigh?)

Ladies, that should be enough motivation for each of us to continue seeking to better appreciate, understand and support her man in the way that he needs. God definitely made us different, but that is what keeps things interesting. Your challenge is to strive to provide the encouragement he needs as he becomes all God intends for him to be.

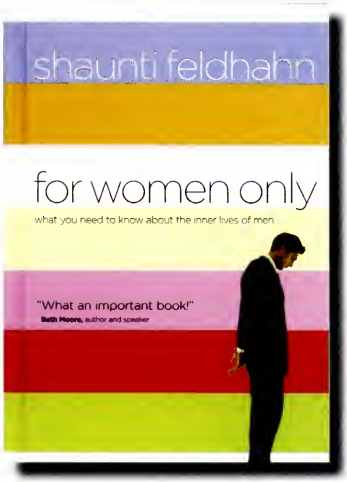
You have heard it said that "behind every good man is a great woman." In response to this statement, Shaunti recorded one anonymous man's comment:

"There are a lot of men out there who are mediocre, simply because their wives will not support them and bring them to greatness. And there are a lot of mediocre men who are destined to become great men — who are becoming great men — because their wives love and support them. My wife expects great things from me, even though I am a pretty ordinary guy really. She looks at me like I am a genius in my field. She respects me in public and affirms me in private. I love her. And like all men, I want to live up to her expectations."

In the movie "The Natural" an amazing baseball talent (played by Robert Redford ... do I hear another collective sigh?) finally breaks into the major leagues and is very successful. When a slump hits, he begins to doubt the game and himself. One of the most dramatic scenes in the movie occurs when Redford, mired in self-pity and doubt, steps up to the plate as the crowd taunts him. In the midst of all the booing and yelling, an old girlfriend, who is in the stand, rises to her feet to support him. It was an extremely simple action, yet it profoundly affected Redford. We know this because he responded by hitting a home run, and his confidence was restored.

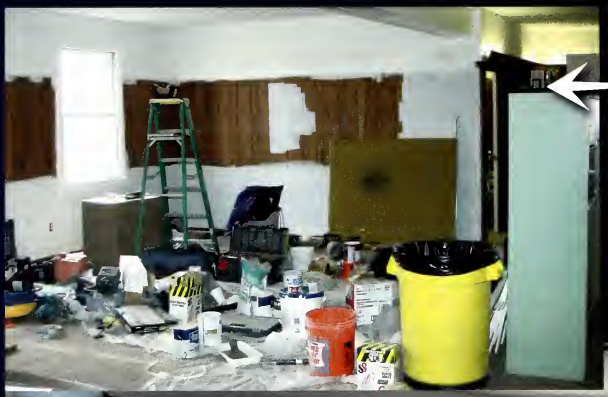
Of course men would love that scene! Did you notice that she didn't scream directions from her seat? She didn't march down to the field and proceed to tell him what he was doing wrong. She just stood in silent support, affirming her belief in him, and that is *exactly* what he needed to knock it out of the park!

So it is in life, and may we commit ourselves collectively to go forth in our quest to truly understand the men in our lives. And on that note, I close ... *Shall we all rise?*✞



Shaunti Feldhahn is a bestselling author, nationally syndicated newspaper columnist, and public speaker. She holds a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University and has worked on Wall Street and Capitol Hill. Shaunti is a weekly columnist on women's issues and current events for the "Atlanta Journal-Constitution." Shaunti and her husband, Jeff, are active leaders in their church, leading a hope group that encourages married couples toward greater intimacy with God and each other.

Order your copy of "For Women Only" from the Venture Bookstore at 1-800-676-0694



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From the Editor



Even before I became a pastor, I wanted to be a church planter. Once, while in college, I spent a weekend helping an evangelistic team minister on another college campus. After a "rally" on Saturday night, there was a "worship service" on Sunday morning, attended only by the team and four college students. My heart went out to those students. I "had it made" at a small Christian college where there were several hundred fellow believers. But the four Christian students at this state university didn't know any other Christians. I wanted to drop out of school that very day, move into the basement of their dorm, and start a church for them in the student union building. I would have done it if I could have figured out how to make a living.

Later, while working full-time for the same evangelistic team, I spent a Sunday evening preaching at a little church building near where I lived. There wasn't actually a congregation; the service was a "set-up" because the property would revert to previous owners if the group that owned it didn't hold at least one service there each year. I had been asked to hold that service on the day the rest of the United States was celebrating its Bicentennial. Again I felt the urge to quit my job and devote my time to planting a "real" church in that place. But I didn't do it.

(Editorial continued on page 23)

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OUR YOUNGEST CHURCH: An Interview with Rev. Adrian Dixon

by Dr. John Roller



It took me almost three hours to get from my driveway to the church parking lot Sunday morning (April 30), but it was well worth it.

The church I was planning to attend is tied with another church for the honor of being the "youngest" fully recognized church in the Advent Christian denomination. It had "upgraded" from "mission" status to full membership in the Advent Christian Conference of Eastern North Carolina two months earlier on Saturday, February 25.

The facility didn't look like much from the outside — just a simple sign reading "Northside Community Church" over the entrance to one of several suites in a smaller-than-average strip mall in a suburb of Raleigh, N.C.

Once inside, I was immediately greeted by a woman who seemed excited about being there and who wanted to tell me everything a visitor could possibly want to know. She either already knew who I was, or it didn't matter to her — she never did get around to asking me my name! What was more important was to make me feel welcome, and I was already starting to, even though I only knew one other member of

the church. That, of course, was the pastor, Rev. Adrian Dixon: the man I had come to interview for this article.

"He's one of the greatest preachers we've ever experienced, and we've been around for a while," said a middle-aged couple as the service was letting out, an hour and a half later.

"I've known Adrian ever since the day he came home from the hospital," said another gentleman, leaning into the microphone of my pocket tape recorder. "He is more concerned about people's spiritual lives than about building numbers for the church. Adrian reaches out to individuals — whether you come to this church or not, he cares about you."

"Obviously," I thought, "he's taught these friends of his to be that way as well."

"How did you get interested in coming to this church?" I asked a couple in their late twenties. "We came for the 'Forty Days of Purpose' program," they replied. "That was the first time we'd been here, and we've just kept coming back."

A young man with a limp approached me and stated, "I moved here five months ago from Kentucky, and I have felt more welcome at this church than any church I have ever been to in my life."

"Doesn't anybody want to tell me what 'the problem with this church is'?" I wondered. I've been to too many struggling churches in the last several years, I guess. I never did get anybody to tell me that. There was a 2-year-old who was bawling her head off, but when I asked her what was wrong with the church, she instantly stopped crying and just stared at me with her mouth hanging open in mid-cry.

"...I have felt more welcome at this church than any church I have ever been to in my life."

John Roller: *"What got you interested in the idea of starting a new church?"*

Adrian Dixon: "Dwight Carpenter mentioned it to me in 1999. He asked me if I'd ever thought of church planting. Up until then, I hadn't, but about eight months later, my roommate in college came back from a convention he'd gone to, and he was really excited about church planting. I began to think maybe God wanted me to go in that direction."

JR: *"How did you pick this particular community (Knightdale, N.C.)?"*

AD: "We looked at several different places — Greensboro, Wilson, Raleigh, Knightdale. Originally we were going to go with North Raleigh, but we were told a lot of other church plants were already starting up in that area, so then we did a survey of this area and 85% of the people here said they thought there was a need for a new church."

JR: *"How did you actually go about beginning the work?"*

AD: "There were three of us – 22, 22, and 21 years old. Phil Spry helped us do a telemarketing survey of Knightdale, and we got a lot of responses from that. We would call those families, mail them information, and we put signs out about 'Northside Community Church, coming soon,' with contact information."

JR: *"How did you pick the name for the church?"*

AD: "We thought we were going to be in North Raleigh, so when we moved to Knightdale we decided to stick with the name because we had already advertised it so much."

IR: *"Does it work for you in Knightdale?"*

AD: "Yes, it does! People around here know us; we're very involved with the community and with other churches in the area. We went on a missions trip with the Knightdale Baptist Church. We did community services together, so people are very familiar with Northside."

IR: *"Once you started getting responses from people who said, 'Yeah, I'd be interested in becoming involved in a new church,' what did you do with them?"*

AD: "We called to confirm their address and talked to them a little bit. We had a countdown to the church launch, which was set for November of 2001. For eight weeks, we sent out postcards telling how many weeks till the church start. After we had done all this mailing, the place where we were going to meet — which was a school — pulled out of the deal, so we had to delay the 'launch.' We started meeting as a Bible study group in November of 2001. We were looking for a place to meet. When we found a place in the Wal-Mart shopping center, we had to do a lot of remodeling to make it usable for a church. We had a loan from the conference and spent a lot of that on the remodeling. We had our Grand Opening service on Sunday, February 17, 2002. There were about 50 people there. A lot of them were family; some were denominational representatives. After the first Sunday, attendance dropped off to the 20s and 30s. After a year it climbed into the 40s. Last year, we experienced a lot of growth and attendance rose through the 50s, 60s and 70s. Now we're averaging 80. There have been three Sundays on which we had 100 to 120. We have moved five times. A couple of times the town rented us a building; then we had to move again. We do a lot of outreach activities — things like free barbecues and free donuts. When we tell people about Northside, usually the response is, 'Oh, I know about you. Where are you meeting now?' They know we're probably not in the same place we were last week."

People have been drawn to Northside Community Church because of:

1. Invitations such as: mailings and members inviting others to come.

2. Public activities such as: free barbecues and donut giveaways.

3. Visibility such as: connecting with people in the community.

4. The "40 Days of Purpose" program.

IR: *"The place you're in now, you've done some remodeling — that's a rental, too, isn't it?"*

AD: "Yes; we have about two-and-a-half years left on our lease. We haven't set a time frame for building, but that's the most stability we've had so far."

IR: *"What prompted that growth?"*

AD: "The '40 Days of Purpose' program helped. We had started a prayer group that met on Monday nights for three months. Everyone came together with the same vision. At the beginning of January we put it to the people. That had a lot do with it. It's been growing ever since."

IR: *"The new people that have been coming in the past year — what has drawn them?"*

AD: "Invitations, public activities, visibility ... when we were meeting at a place where we couldn't have a sign, the free barbecues and donut giveaways helped; we did a mailer; people were inviting others and connecting with people in the community. People who've been coming for a couple of years have been inviting others."

IR: *"Your personal involvement with the church — is this a full-time position for you?"*

AD: "No, I work full-time at a hospital in Raleigh. God opened the door for me to go there. It's a unique ministry that God has used. For example, the land that was given to the church was in connection with my work at the hospital. As the people in the church have stepped up their activity in ministry, I've been able to pull away a little bit as leadership has emerged."

JR: *"What's the church's relationship with other churches in Knightdale?"*

AD: "It's a bridge. When I got here, there were no community services; churches didn't interact at all. I wanted to get the churches together. We got five churches together out of the 15 churches in Knightdale. Each group will communicate with Northside even though they won't communicate with each other. When I first came here, a pastor told me, 'We don't sheep-steal around here.' At first I think they felt threatened by us, but they realized that we weren't going after people who were already in church. 75-80% of the people at Northside had no previous church experience. Only four people came to us from other churches in Knightdale. Now the other pastors are a little more friendly toward us."

JR: *"What about your relationship with the other Advent Christian churches in the Eastern North Carolina Conference?"*

AD: "They've all been very supportive, especially Garner. Pastor Joe Pritchett has been very influential — nurturing and encouraging us. Living Water Ministries and Pastor Rick Crocker have been very helpful, though they're not very close geographically. We were accepted into Conference membership on February 25. There had been a lot of hesitation to give money to 22-year-olds to plant a church, but they were willing to try. Faith and stupidity look a lot alike; some people thought we were being stupid, but really we were doing it by faith. If Northside were to close today, the Conference would get its money back and also the land that was donated, so they'd have more to start other churches with than they had before we started."

JR: *"Have you had any contact with Advent Christian churches in other parts of the country?"*

AD: "I've been in touch with Brent Ross, Chad Irving, Dave Ross, Roger Byrd ... When we were traveling, we went to a lot of churches in the Piedmont Conference, so we have a lot of support from there, too."

JR: *"How do you see yourselves in relationship to 'the ends of the earth'?"*

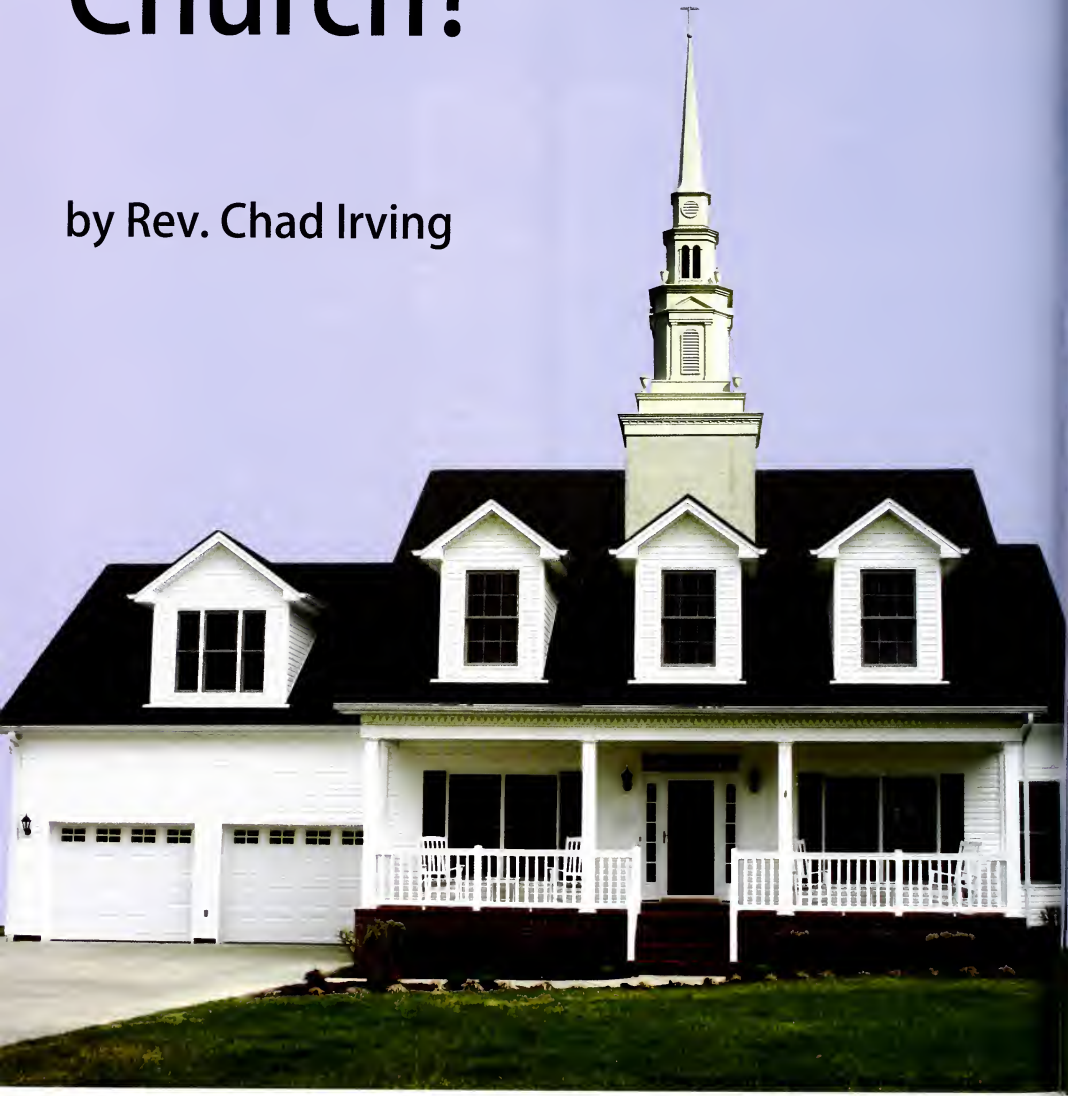
AD: "We've had three people who have begun the ordination process at Northside. One is going to Washington, D.C. for three months. Maybe we can partner with Garner to jointly plant a church in the Raleigh area. I see us as a church that is going to plant other churches, and they don't have to look like Northside. I took some of the best church planting advice that was given to me and went totally the opposite way. If you find something that succeeds and run with it, God will bless it. We're part of the total church planting movement worldwide. We have participated in Penny Crusade every year since we first started. This year our goal is between $2,500 and $3,000. We participate in Camp Dixie. We let another church use our facility. We're trying to be very kingdom-focused."

JR: *"Have some people been on short-term missions trips?"*

AD: "We took a group to Greer, S.C., to do some missions work. Jeremy Thompson, our associate pastor, is going to D.C. We're looking at a trip next year, somewhere on the east coast of the United States. I don't think we're ready to go overseas yet. Church planting is my heart and my vision. I'm a pastor who happened to plant a church."✞

What is a House Church?

by Rev. Chad Irving



House churches go by many different terms. Some prefer "organic church;" others "New Testament House Church;" my favorite is "simple church." Our church, Oasis, believes that the concept of "church" is simple. A church is a group of people who have been called together to love God and love people. It really is that simple. Please don't confuse simplicity with ease or shallowness. Even though the concept of love is rather simple, it is very deep and difficult to truly practice.

Just as conventional churches are different from one another, house churches are not all alike. I cannot tell you about how all house churches operate, but I will tell you about Oasis. People often ask me, "How many people go to your church?" I have difficulty with this question for two reasons. First of all, we avoid the term "going to church." The church is the people, not a place. One doesn't go to church, but is part of the church. Oasis is Oasis 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Although we do have a weekly gathering, we try to have fellowship with one another throughout the week as well. It is difficult to truly love someone whom you only see for one or two hours once a week. Secondly, the number of people who attend our weekly gathering isn't of high importance to us. Our goal is to have relationships with people. We seek to be a light and a witness to people throughout the week. If (and when) God leads them to our weekly gathering is not up to us. We believe that our weekly gathering is a time for us as believers to be strengthened and encouraged. It is the three hours of the week that is for us. The rest of the week gives us plenty of time for outreach to unbelievers. Of course, if someone is a seeker who really wants to come, we welcome them, but the gathering is for the church. So the question we ask is not, "How many people are at church?" but, "am I being loving in the relationships God has given me?"

Our weekly gathering is at 5:00 p.m. every Sunday. We always begin with a meal. Sharing meals was normal for the church in the New Testament. We rotate our meeting place among our members. Whoever is hosting for that night usually prepares the main course, while others bring side dishes. Our meal also serves as the Communion service. Eating together gives us a wonderful opportunity to catch up with each other and build our relationships with one another. After dinner, we sing some songs together, study the scriptures, and pray. The entire evening usually lasts from 2½ to 3 hours.

I don't like the term "Bible Study," because our goal is not really to know the Bible better, but to know the Lord better. Our time in the scriptures is interactive. It is not a lecture with one person talking and everyone else listening. Since the Holy Spirit is in all of us, all of us have something to add to the discussion. We consider the Holy Spirit to be our Chief Teacher.

Our goal is not to grow into a big church, but to multiply house churches. We don't multiply at a certain number, but when God calls us to multiply. That being said, we would not want to have more than 20 people in a house church. If a church gets too big, it is hard to have relationships with each member.

On a larger scale, we are networked together with other house churches in the Phoenix Valley (You can visit the website at www.phoenixhousechurch.org.). Occasionally all the house churches in the valley will gather together for worship and fellowship. We also have times of prayer fellowship for the house church leaders. The valley-wide network is interdenominational.

We really do strive to keep things simple. Jesus is the Builder of our church. He is our Head and our Pastor. We don't have a church board; instead, we make decisions by consensus. We do have elders who have the responsibility to make sure the church keeps its eyes on Christ. Although the members have deep respect for the elders, everyone has an equal say on church matters. We have no clergy, because we deeply believe in the priesthood of all believers. We have no budget. When we need to spend money, we do. We give about 80% of our income away to people and/or ministries that we have together decided to give to. We have no programs. Programs are not necessarily bad, but sometimes they serve as replacements for relationships. We do not want to commit to programs; we want to commit to people. Programs don't change people's lives — Jesus does.

God may not be calling all of us into house churches, but he is calling all of us into loving relationships. Whatever type of church you are in, it should support these relationships rather than hinder them. Love God and love people; it really is that simple. ✞

Chad Irving lives in Tempe, Arizona, with his wife Tricia and daughter Isabella. Chad serves as an elder in Oasis House Church Network.

The Good Life



By Dr. William H. Chadwick

Perhaps one of the most precious promises offered to Americans is the freedom and opportunity to pursue the good life. No other government that I am aware of includes the phrase, "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" in their Declaration for Independence. For that matter how many even have a bill of rights for every man, woman and child in their country? But America does.

We promise people a chance to have the good life. It is the tribal knowledge that is shared around the campfires of our holiday meals. We tell stories of how our great-grandfather came to America with 10 cents in his pocket and created a successful business venture here in the Land of the Free. It is the philosophy that drives our education program — "No child left behind." It is the promise and hope that inspires thousands of aliens to transverse our borders; it is the driving force behind the morning commute.

For each generation the good life has been defined differently. Pilgrims rejoiced at the religious freedoms the New World afforded. The revolution brought "inalienable rights" and liberty from outside political rule. Civil equality was the good life for slaves and women. The defeat of World War dictators provided hope for peace, which became the standard measure of well-being. And, finally, financial prosperity, physical health, and national security are the current things we long for.

There are many things in the teachings of Jesus that he stood for. He was devoutly centered on sharing clearly what God requires of a person who desires to gain eternal life. Bigotry was abolished by his openness to minister to women, slaves, gentiles, the poor, the rich, the religious, and the pagan. Love was established as the key to discovering not only God's saving grace, but quality of life between human-beings. But nowhere in the scriptures does Jesus stand for acquiring the elements that our current generation values as the good-life. If I was honest, I could say that many of the things that define the good life for Americans today, Jesus would label as distractions from the pursuit of God.

Majoring in economics and business in college, I became a firm believer in capitalism. It rewards hard work, inspires creative thinking, has a sense of equality, and delivers pleasure to those who mas-

ter it. Growing up in poverty ($10,000.00 per year for a family of eight was pretty skinny even in the seventies), I placed a high value on the security that money and things could provide. When I discovered Jesus, it seemed as if all of my worlds were now in perfect harmony, as the Christian faith seemed to endorse what I believed was the good life. Certainly there was no conflict with prosperity, in fact it seemed to be an attribute of those who were pleasing the LORD — *"Blessed is the man who puts his trust in the LORD, tender is the man who yields his life to the LORD, for he is like a tree planted by the river bank, bearing fruit in every season without fail. His leaves will never wither and all he does shall succeed, for the LORD guides the steps of a Godly man"* Psalm 1 (CPVOTB). But as often is the case with spiritual maturity, there are deeper lessons to be learned.



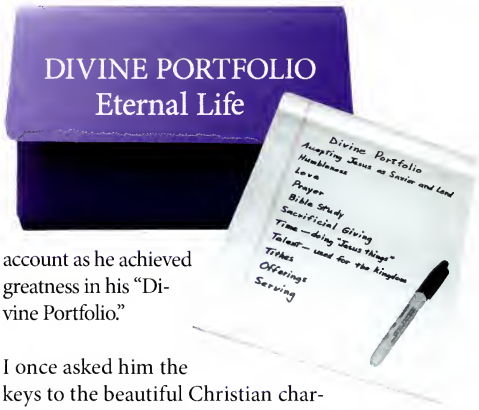
"Money can't buy you love." It takes years to realize that. Neither can it buy you peace, security, long-term health, or depth in your eternal character. Stuff does not quench the thirst for more, and chrome does not create confidence. Provision does not increase the fiber of relationships as many reject the notion that "things" are a form of caring. And ultimately the old cliché about "no U-hauls behind a hearse" becomes the epithet of the good life.

Perhaps there is wisdom in age. Solomon, the richest King of Israel ended his life writing profusely about the stupidity and emptiness of collecting and acquiring things in ones quest for the good life (Ecclesiastes). In the end he placed value on a man's relationship and service to God, and one's relationship to those we love. Jesus teaches the same thing. "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" (Mt.16:26). "Do not store up for yourself treasures that moth and rust consume or that the thief takes away, but instead store up for yourself treasures in heaven" (Mt.6:20). "Love the LORD with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk.12:30).

Treasures in Heaven. As I have lived and succeeded at gaining the American dream, I have often contemplated the importance of holding my "Divine Portfolio" at the same level of achievement as my, "Earthly Portfolio." Curiously with age, I, like Solomon, derive less and less pleasure from things. I find myself thinking a lot about spiritual legacy and the difference that my life will have made for the God that I claim to be devoted to. In short, I ponder what actions in this life will elicit the words from Christ, *"Well done my good and faithful servant?"* (Mt.25:21).

Jack Blackhall will never be listed in the American "Who's Who" directory. Jack was a janitor at Gordon College for most of his life. I had the privilege — and I do mean privilege — of being his pastor as he entered a retirement home in Wolfeboro, N.H. I have never met a more humble, loving or peace-filled man, or a man who was more singularly focused in his mission in life. Jack was an evangelistic. In the summer he would walk the two miles (he couldn't afford a car) to the center of town and preach Christ on the village green. He passed out tracts without shame and radiated such a positive conviction that people often found engagements with him inspiring. When Jack shared his faith he had such passion about the God he served that tears would often well up in his eyes.

Jack had money but he never considered it his. As long as I knew him, silent gifts were given to those in need. He gave away every earthly possession that he owned to people whom he thought could use them. He lived well below his means and yet Jack Blackhall had the good life. Everyday he accrued interest on the



account as he achieved greatness in his "Divine Portfolio."

I once asked him the keys to the beautiful Christian character that he and his wife always had. Jack said it was from three areas where they were committed to follow Jesus. He identified them as: time, talent, and tithe. Jack had been taught that these were all elements that defined what it means to die to Christ. If you really have given the LORD your life, then each of these areas should reflect a major sacrificial submission to the MASTER. They were the keys to making regular deposits to the "Divine Portfolio."

For Jack, his life belonged to the LORD. In his simple way he had reasoned that 10 percent of his time each week belonged to God. I have met few who were more diligent in keeping this account balanced. Seventeen hours each week were donated to the church, social services in Jesus name (Jack called a glass of water a drink unless you gave it in JESUS name, then it was a blessing), and his personal evangelistic efforts. For over 40 years Jack kept his ledger balanced amassing over 35,000 hours of Christian service. All of this while raising a family and leading a simple life.

As I mentioned, Jack was an evangelist. That talent belonged to the LORD and Jack evangelized. He believed in the three-foot rule — anyone within three feet was placed there by God for Jack to share with! He was never ashamed, and although rejected on more than one occasion, he merely considered the person in process, and Jack had been faithful in adding one more piece to the puzzle that eventually would reveal the image of Christ. He would often say, "A janitor was what I did, but I am an evangelist." It was a gift that Jack wore as a medal of honor around the countenance of his life.

It was embarrassing for me to see a couple that I knew lived so humbly be so diligent in giving to the church. The Biblical tithe for Jack belonged to the church. Weekly they gave a full 10 percent of their income to the ministry of the church, for Jack saw the church as the "Lord's warehouse," spoken of in Malachi 3:10. If he had other areas that he felt money should go to, that, for Jack, was an *offering*. He made sure that this contribution came out of his pocket as an offering and not out of the tithe, which he considered the property of GOD. There was no compromise on these points, and the integrity of giving made a lasting impression on my life.

In the end, as I examine my life, I must confess that I feel the need to cram a lot more into my "Divine Portfolio." More time doing Jesus-things — for free — more use of my talents being given to the kingdom — for free — and more of my financial resources being used to support the church I love and the GOD I serve. Ultimately the good life is that internal peace that acknowledges the fact that you gave your best, or as one coach said, "You left your whole game on the field." It is the joy of seeing spiritual legacy radiate out from your relationship with JESUS, and it is the knowledge that yours was a life GOD was glad to have created.

One generation building on the success of the next, until today America stands in stark contrast to the rest of the world as everyone enjoys prosperity that far out-strips our third-world neighbors. What started as the promise of a chicken in every pot, has grown to reflect materialistic excesses from housing to medicine. It is the zenith of capitalism, consumerism, and educational enlightment, yet few would deny that all that glitters is not gold. Happiness remains elusive. The baby boomers' quest has been eulogized by the Beatles' lyrics, "Money can't buy you LOVE." And so the pursuit of happiness remains an objective yet attained.✞

Dr. William H. Chadwick is serving as pastor of the Stroudwater Christian Church (AC) in Portland, Maine.

Church Planting

Our Church Family Tree



By Timothy Dodd

When I first met Chad Irving, I remember sitting in the parsonage just chatting and beginning to get to know him. The topic turned to church planting (as it usually does with Chad) and I asked the question, "Church planting? Why in the world do we need more churches? Aren't there plenty already?"

During the years Chad was here as associate pastor, I spent quite a bit of time with him, and a good portion of that time was spent talking about church planting. He gave me books to read and was always open for discussion. One of the great things I found out about Chad is that he is always open for discussion, even if I hold a completely opposing viewpoint. He doesn't need me to approve of his opinion in order for him to hold it.

As time went on, I began to see that churches were closing faster than they were opening, and that even if we never opened a new church, our world's population would greatly outdistance churches very quickly. I saw how, for reasons that are many (and at the same time mysterious), church plants brought in new Christians and are one of the most effective (as well as cost-effective) forms of evangelism today.

A church plant allows us to create a new church that has no traditions of previous years but gets to create its own history. A church plant gets to try something new. A church plant has an opportunity to engage culture in a way that an established church can't.

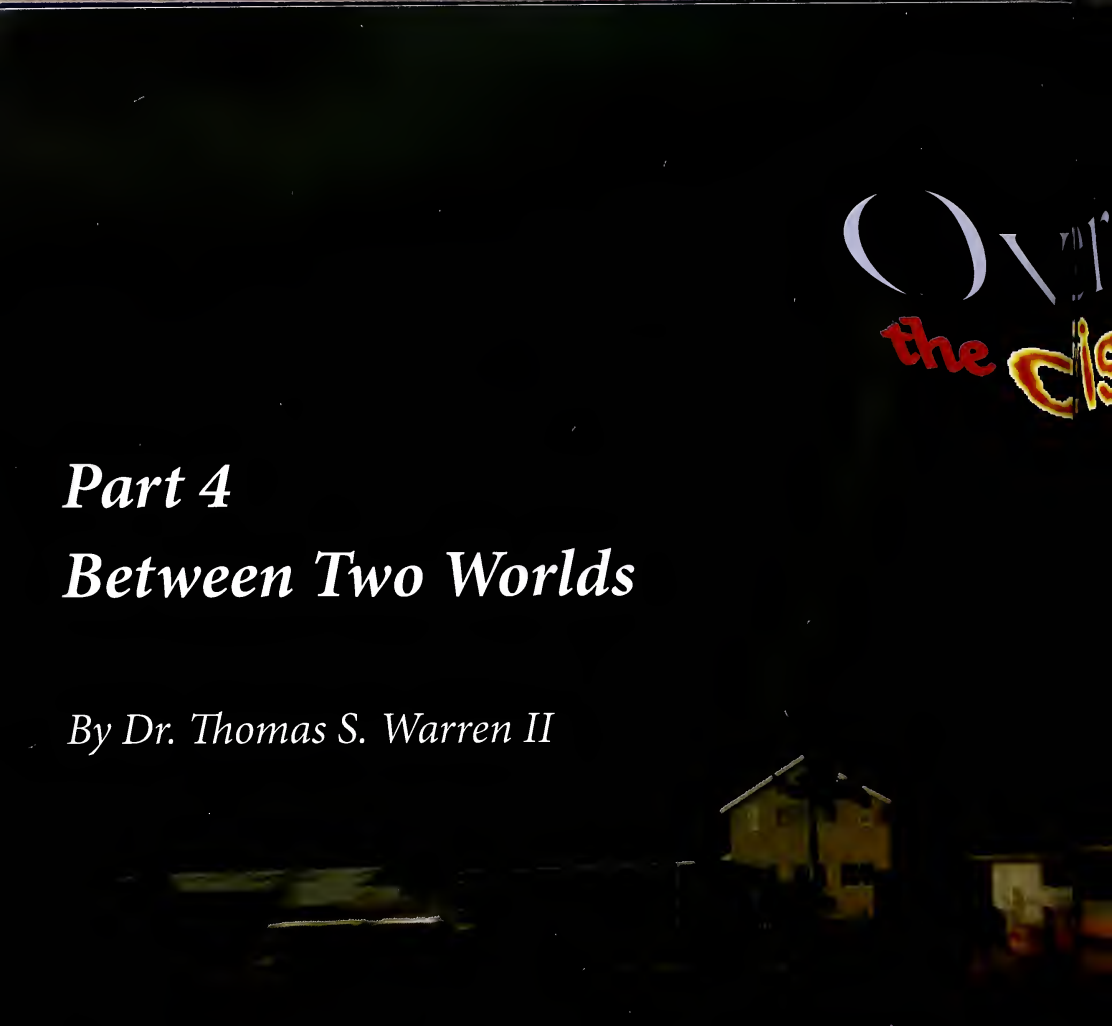
However, if one church planted another, doesn't that mean that the church gets smaller at the expense of the church plant? Strangely enough, statistics say that the opposite is true. Churches that plant churches tend to grow rather than shrink. The church that shrinks is the exception, not the rule. In fact, there is a church in Seattle — which Dr. James Crouse was talking to me about — that when it plants a new church, not only does it send people from its own congregation out, it sends out its best people. They have the passion to want the best for this new church, and they have the faith to know that God will replace those who go. As it turns out, they have yet to be wrong.

When I think back on the history of West Valley and Church on the Hill, I can see why some of this information might be counterintuitive — the opposite of our experience. When I look deeper, I ask myself, "When was West Valley growing and most engaged in the community?" My answer seems to point to when it was a new church plant — when the Mansion was being rebuilt. People were coming to commit their lives to Jesus and being baptized in a way that hasn't been equaled since.

This fits into the church planting life-cycle. The longer a church is in existence, the fewer converts it has. It happens gradually over a period of time. This means that if we aren't growing numerically (or in converts), it is really part of our life-cycle, and that perhaps if we want to jump-start the process again, being somehow involved in a local church plant will move us in the right direction.

It may seem unnecessary, scary or strange at first, but I think that as we begin to learn more, begin to pray and begin to move in the direction of church planting, we may just find the joy in being on the front edge of our community, our church and our denomination. ✝

Timothy Dodd is the pastor of the West Valley AC Church in Auburn, Washington.



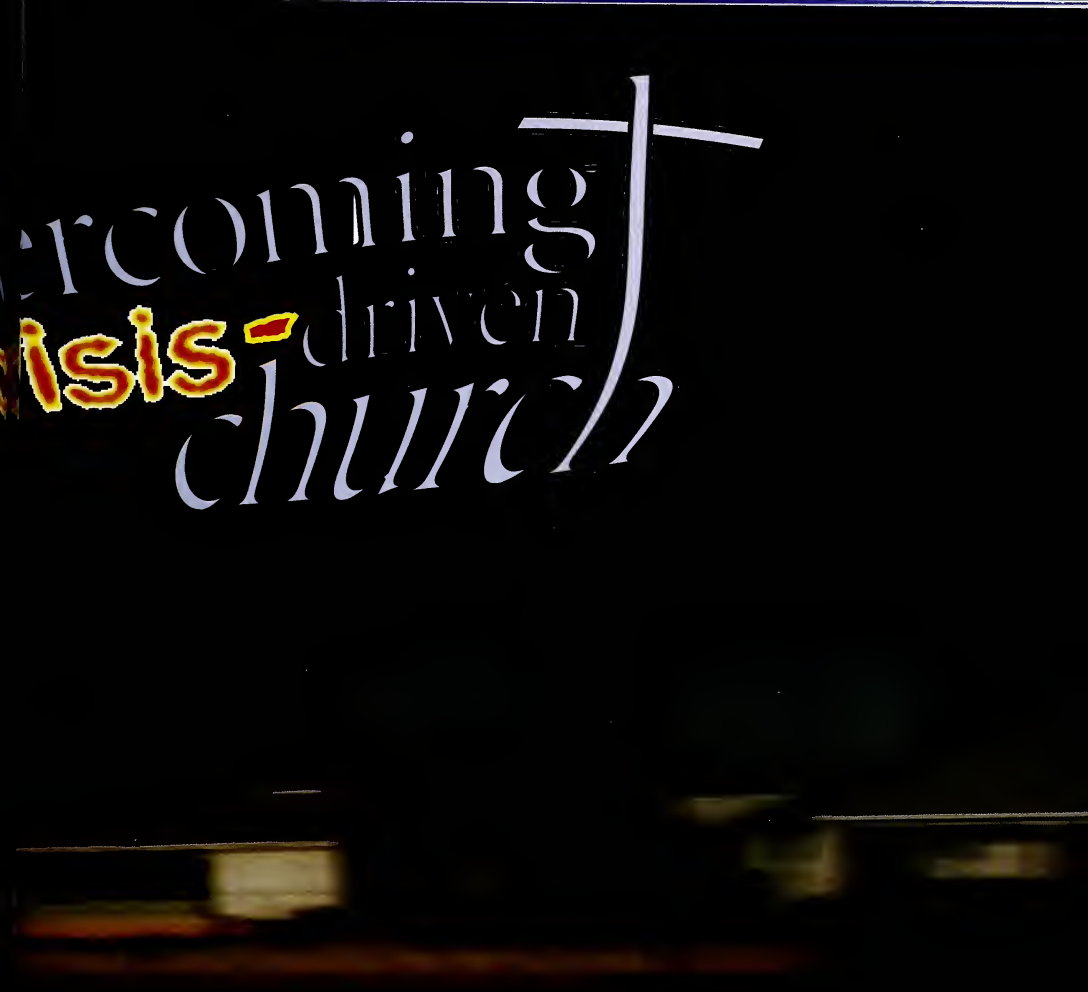
Part 4
Between Two Worlds

By Dr. Thomas S. Warren II

The crisis-driven church is caught between two worlds. One is the world of ***status quo*** and the other is the world of ***opportunity laced with fear.***

In the world of *status quo* there is a pursuit of comfort; the goal is, "Don't rock the boat!" Few things are questioned in terms of whether they work or not, because that's the way they've always been done. Connection with the world outside the church is minimal, because the church has little understanding of that world and few relationships with those who live in it.

The *"other world"* (the one outside the church) is filled with innovation and change, words that stir up the emotions of those inside the church. In that world there are people who have little interest in the



church but who are very interested in pursuing the best for their lives, even though they might not turn to the church for help. Those within the church are quite fearful of that world, believing that it is evil and should be avoided at any cost. Ironically, it is this church that God is calling into the world so that the good news of Christ can be shared with those who don't know him.

As the church stands between these two worlds, it is not surprising to hear that something should be done about the distance between them. What is surprising is the fact that we have had a biblical mandate to live with purpose in relationship to the world ever since creation. Had we been obedient to this mandate in the first place, perhaps we wouldn't be in the mess we're in today.

If you're one of those who happen to be thinking, "What's the problem?" consider the following: In the eyes of many, the church has become just another part of their busy schedules that they try to squeeze

into their lives. It is seen as more meetings or services that must be attended. There is little there to attract them to what is worthy of their total commitment.

This is especially true for the younger, emerging generations. The practices (and, in some cases, beliefs) that were accepted by the builder and boomer generations are not accepted, or — at the very least — they are questioned. Many have chosen to leave the church as a result of this perceived incongruity between what the church believes and its lack of connection to the real world. For many, they are leaving in an effort to find or preserve their faith. Ralph Winters, a noted missiologist, states that in the next five to 10 years the number of people he calls "churchless Christians" will significantly increase. They have become churchless because they do not find in the church of today a valid response to the needs and problems in the world.

In the eyes of some, even among those within the church, there is a big "disconnect" with the world. This is especially true for those outside of the church. There is little hope for change unless the church moves toward the world. Unless this gap is closed, the church of the twenty-first century is doomed to insignificance as far as being truly purpose-driven is concerned. But what exactly **is** the purpose for the church, and — once defined — how can it be achieved? If it is true that the church is essentially a non-player in this day and age when it comes to being effective in carrying out God's purpose in the world, what must be done to turn things around?

MISSION DEFINED

Almost anyone who has been in the church for a while can tell you that Jesus died for our sins so that we would not perish (John 3:16). It's a verse they probably learned in Sunday school years ago. Flowing from this verse is the belief that we also should love the world because Jesus did. **The reality is that the world is not feeling the love.**

Many profess that the church is irrelevant. The issue, however, appears to be something totally different. It is thought that the world around the church isn't interested in what the church has to offer. The reality is becoming clearer with each passing day. Perhaps an illustration will help to explain what I am saying.

WIMPING OUT!

One would not expect to learn a valuable lesson about doing ministry by eating in a fast-food restaurant, but that's exactly what happened. On a trip to South Africa, I found myself — along with my traveling companions — eating at Wimpy's, a hamburger place based upon the infamous "hamburglar" in the popular cartoon, *Popeye*. During our meals we became familiar with our waitress, whose name was Violet. Throughout the week we talked and shared with Violet as much as we could, but at the end of the week we said our goodbyes.

During our final meal at the restaurant, we were joined by Pastor Moses Anbongy. Moses comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. For many years, he served as a pastor in Windhoek, Namibia. Only recently, he had moved to Johannesburg, South Africa. **Moses met Violet too!** After being home for a week, I received an email from Moses telling me that he had returned to the restaurant to visit with Violet, and he was thrilled to say that Violet had given her life in faith to Jesus Christ. I was amazed at this report and at the same time troubled by a question I couldn't get out of my mind. How could five people, who claim to love and serve Christ, miss out on such an incredible opportunity to share Christ with Violet? Further, what is it about one man that suggests the way in which the church must act if it is to reach a lost world? Beyond this, what can Violet teach us about bringing the good news to a world that is lost and — in many cases — not even aware that they are lost?

Sitting in Wimpy's and doing nothing but eating while being around Violet is like finding out that

your church has substituted "going to church" for "being a church." Unfortunately, it is common today to find many local churches **sinking** into this theological and practical quicksand, and unless something is done, this enemy of the church will only tighten its death grip.

Evidence of this dilemma can be seen in the practice of being **mission-minded** rather than **missional.** Churches are filled with activities that shout "we care about the lost," ranging from mission conferences, short-term mission trips and raising money for missions through a denominational fund-raising campaign, but little can be seen or heard in their ministries that say "missional."

When is the church going to learn that it's not the number of activities that make the difference but whether or not the church's ministry results in accomplishing God's mission? Like Moses, the measure of a missional church is seen in the transformational impact of its members in the world. It is impossible to separate the individual focus in the church from its corporate endeavor. **The church is what its members are!**

Unfortunately, there are many Christians and churches that have exchanged the missional purpose of God for a maintenance approach to ministry, and there is a big difference in the impact each one can have for the kingdom of God. A church can only be declared successful to the degree that it **reflects the missional heart of God.** God longs for a church that not only talks about reaching the lost, but proactively partners with him in this redemptive task (Exodus 19:3-6; 1 Peter 2:9). Jesus defined the litmus test for being missional when he said, "Love God and love man" with everything you have (Matthew 22:37-39). The love we have for the Father must be converted into a **visible** and **practical** demonstration of love for a lost world.



TAKING YOUR STAND

A few years ago, while I was preaching at a prison, an inmate responded to my message concerning the idea that God so loved us that he "tabernacled" among us in order for us to behold the glory, grace, and truth of the Lord (John 1:14). Throughout the sermon the inmate, now quite animated, would shout, **"Tabernacle! Say it again, preacher! I like that."**

The world won't be interested in our theology until they can feel like they belong. ... For the missional church, people can belong long before they believe.

A missional church is a "tabernacling" church. A missional church is one that plants itself in the midst of the world around them and loves them in the same way Christ loved us. Perhaps the prisoner loved the idea of Christ tabernacling among people like himself. No wonder that Jesus tells us that at the end of time he will be interested in whether or not we've been to prison.

Regrettably, many churches have chosen — out of fear or ignorance — to relate to the world around them in other ways. Some have adopted a fortress mentality, which leads them to see the lost as the enemy, even while they say they love them. In this state of mind, evangelism becomes distorted and turns out to be a search for the unchurched. The church's goal consists of cleaning up the unchurched and only then allowing them into the church.

Other churches go the opposite direction and become too much like the world around them by giving into gimmicks just to get them into church. Fully armed with the latest Christian fad, the church is duped into thinking that they are a great church. The shocker is that people aren't looking for a great church, because they don't think the church is for them — and they're right.

The biggest hurdle facing the church today is finding a way to convert from what Reggie NcNeal calls "Churchianity" to Christianity. People need Christ. What they don't necessarily need is your or my version of how to "do church." In order for the church to begin reaching this present-day culture, the church will need *a* **missional**, not **methodological** fix. What we really need, says McNeal, **"is a radical obedience to an ancient command, a loss of self rather than self-preoccupation, concern about service rather than concern about style."**

People outside the church don't care about the color of the carpet, but they do care about character. They aren't impressed about the size of your building, but they're captured by the integrity of your life. They really don't spend too much time worrying about whether or not you sing hymns or choruses, and yet they are deeply moved by the way you love them as they are, rather than for what you think they will become or what they will do. The world won't be interested in our theology until they can feel like they belong.

To the mission-minded church, **people must believe and then belong.** For the missional church, **people can belong long before they believe.** This can only happen for the church that is partnering with God to reach a lost world. Last time I checked, the world isn't going to church, but the world **is searching.** The crisis-driven church must change its focus away from arguing about issues that make little difference in terms of accomplishing God's will, and cope with the impending crisis of becoming totally ineffective at reaching a lost world for Christ.

Not too long ago a waitress approached me following my meal and asked if she could talk with me. She told me that she had overheard some of my conversation with my lunch partner and wondered if she could ask me a few questions. She said that she was searching for truth in her life and thought I could help her. Raina is just one of many who are searching

for truth. As Raina left, I wondered, "How is the church going to reach the Rainas in the world unless it changes?



A DIFFERENT LOOK

There's no question that the church will look different when it becomes missional in theology and practice.

- On a trip to India, I met Pastor Kirubakaran, who has invested his life in a ministry of rescuing babies from death. So far, he has rescued over 150 babies who were abandoned on the instructions of tribal leaders. He currently operates an orphanage at the base of the Koli Hills that ministers to these children. **Now, that's missional.**

- A young pastor was recently confronted by homosexual men he met with regularly at a coffee shop. When asked what he thought about their lifestyle, the young pastor asked them if they wanted the truth. He told them what the Bible says concerning homosexuality, but then he said, "I would really like to just hang out with you and be friends." They were amazed at this thought. **Now that's missional.**

- As a church contemplates how they can make a difference for Christ in their community, they decide to move out of their church facility and make it available for a ministry to the less fortunate and needy at no cost. **Now that's missional.**

There's no telling what could happen if the church truly gave itself to being God's partner in his redemptive purposes. In this sense, the missional church is more than a purpose-driven church, especially if the agreed-upon purpose is not dear to God's heart. God is looking for those who will join his purpose and measure their efforts according to his standards and not the world's. His work is **intentional**, **purposeful** and **relational** toward a lost world; our work should be shaped by his heart. Perhaps this will be a new day for the church as it encounters a changing world that continues to look for truth in the midst of so many options. For the church, **the mission is ours should we accept it.**✞



Dr. Thomas "Sam" Warren II is the director of nurture for ACGC.

The Tiguahanon Tribe



An Account of the OBC Missions Class Field Trip

by Kimon & Chin Lee Nicolaides

At 3:00 p.m. on January 27, 2006 we took five students of Kimon's Missions Class in the Highlander (one of the two vehicles belonging to the American Advent Mission Society) from the Oro Bible College campus in Cagayan de Oro to the city of Malaybalay which is located in the Province of Bukidnon in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. We arrived at Pastor Rodney Sarilla's home in Malaybalay at approximately 5:30 p.m.

That evening we were given a brief orientation by a few pastors and church workers who had been working with the Tigua (or Tigwa) tribe that we intended to visit. They would be coming with us on this trip. We also went to the local market in Malaybalay to buy supplies for the trip. These included gifts that we intended to give to four of the tribal chieftains (called *datu*) as well as for the villagers. The gifts to the datos were a customary practice for visitors to the tribe. Our purchases included a 25-pound sack of rice, some salted fish, canned foods and instant noodles. Rodney graciously opened his home for us to stay for the night.

The next morning we got up at about 4:00 a.m. to prepare for the long drive ahead of us. Rodney had a four-wheel-drive pickup truck in which he took six Filipinos. We followed him in our Highlander, leaving at about 5:30 a.m. From Malaybalay, we proceeded south on the main road, which was paved. In about an hour's time, we turned east onto a gravel road. We traveled along this road, which traversed a region with many rice paddies. We saw a large flock of domestic ducks along the way. At about 8:00 a.m. we reached a small town in the municipality of San Fernando (near Bukidnon's border with Agusan del Sur and Davao del Norte), where we stopped for a



Setting out for San Fernando

short while so that some of us could take a break and get refreshed.

We then proceeded on a dirt road, which began to climb up into the regions of higher elevation. During our trip the weather was overcast and it sprinkled occasionally, but because it had been unusually rainy in the previous weeks, we had to drive through three rivers. They had a span of approximately 10 meters and at the point in which we traversed them, they had a depth of approximately one meter, perhaps a little deeper in some places. From the time we left the paved roads until we arrived at the San Fernando Mountains, we encountered no more than half a dozen other vehicles — a couple of Jeepneys (a ubiquitous local means of transport) and the rest were motorcycles. Around 10:00 a.m. we arrived at the end of the portion of road which was navigable by a four-wheeled vehicle. From this point onwards, we had to take a little trek (about an hour) to reach our destination.



End of passable road, trek begins here

The villagers here were glad to provide ponies for us for the remainder of the trip for a minimal fee of 50 pesos (about US $1.00) each one way. Chin Lee (because of a previously injured knee) and one of the other pastors (who was not feeling too well) rode a pony. We also used a pony to carry the rice and some of the supplies. The rest of us walked. The trail went through a couple of small rivers and, because of the rain the previous day, and the rain that was starting again, it was quite mucky in numerous places, when it would reach up to our knees. Even those riding the ponies got mud on them, and the ponies had to be coaxed to move on in a few places.



Some of the children at the Tigua village

When we arrived at the settlement of the Tiguahanon tribe, we saw a clearing on a steep hill which was half encircled by the Tigua River. There were about a dozen *nipa* huts, each fashioned out of what appeared to be bamboo and wood, with a thatched roof of palm leaves. One of the largest of them was a church although they had no electricity. They had recently built a nice little outhouse (toilet) though, for which we were immensely grateful. They also laid a pipe to get water from the river to the village.

The rain got heavier as we arrived at the village, and we took shelter in the hut belonging to a young missionary, Pastor Joel, who has been ministering to the

people there. He is not supported by any mission agency, and Rodney (together with some of the local pastors from the Malaybalay area) had been helping him, bringing supplies to the village whenever they could. Joel speaks the language of the tribe, which we understood to be Manobo (which actually has about 24 dialects). There is still no complete translation of the Bible in that language. An internet search indicated that some parts of the Bible may be available in Manobo (although we did not see any when we were at the village). We were informed that some translation work had been done on some of the gospels (and the epistles to the Corinthians) before the work stopped. Joel had some hymns in the Manobo language, which we used to sing songs at the baptismal service.

The villagers prepared lunch for the entire village and for us with the supplies we had brought. They made some very nice soup. After lunch and coffee, it was time to carry out the baptism for the five families. Everyone was looking forward to that. By then, the rain had slowed to a very slight drizzle. We all went down to the Tigua River. Some of the village children were already swimming and playing in the river. You could see the joy on their faces as they splashed around without a care in the world.



Joel (in striped T-shirt), next to Rodney and Kimon – briefing the baptismal candidates

Kimon was privileged to be asked to baptize the new believers (20 of them altogether) in the Tigua River and in the Manobo language. He had quickly committed to memory (as best as he could) the



Two photos of a baptism in the Tigwa River

words that Joel had written down for him — *"Ogbautismohan ku koikow to ngaran to Amoy, to Anak woy to Balaan no Ispiritu"* which translates to "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It was a wonderful time, honoring God in his work amongst these people. Before receiving Christ as their Savior, these Tigua villagers, like most of the tribal people in the region, practiced animistic religion.

It was approaching 2:00 p.m. when the baptism concluded, and we prepared for the trip back. It was another muddy trek — our shoes were all caked with mud — and we had to change our clothes before starting. We finally reached Malaybalay around 7:00 p.m., and after saying our goodbyes to Rodney and the others, we proceeded back to Cagayan de Oro. Upon reaching Cagayan, just as we were entering the main section of the avenue which was normally congested with traffic, a spectacular fireworks display began. It was something which the major shopping

mall there had planned to celebrate Chinese New Year, which was the next day. It had the effect of causing all the traffic ahead of us to pull over so they could view it. Kimon, particularly, appreciated it, not just because it was a "grand welcome" but because it enabled us to drive straight through without any delay. We arrived at the College a little after 9:00 p.m. Everyone was extremely tired but appreciative of the experience of visiting and meeting the Tiguahanon people.

In the papers later submitted by the students who went on this field trip, they all felt very enriched by the experience and humbled by the commitment of the young missionary who willingly went out to minister to these people on his own, despite the financial sacrifice and inconveniences he had to put up with. We were told that this was the college's first missions field trip of this nature. It is our hope that there will be more missions field trips in the future to show the students the importance of missions, especially to the unreached peoples, for the glory of his kingdom.✞



Kimon Nicolaides and the group of students from the Missions Class at Oro Bible College in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines

Kimon Nicolaides and his wife, Chin Lee, served in the Philippines while Jeff and Penny Vann were on furlough. They are currently in Washington while Kimon is teaching chaplaincy classes.

(Editorial continued)

Still later, I found myself serving as pastor of a small congregation in another state. Because they couldn't pay me full-time, I had more days off each week than I really needed. For a few months I spent one of them, every week, traveling to a town in the next county to hold Bible studies with a young couple whose wedding I had performed back when they lived in the community I served. I was hoping those studies would grow into a "daughter" church. But the project fell apart when the couple divorced.

Later, for three years, I was the salaried pastor of a recently planted church in yet another state. Things went well for the first year, but then a key couple moved away. After that, attendance slowly dwindled until one Easter Sunday there was no one in worship except my immediate family. I began to believe I "didn't have the gifts that a church planter needs to have." And I was probably right. But I've never lost my burden for it.

Along the way, I've done what I could to encourage others to plant churches: I've prayed, served on committees, attended services, donated money, and written articles. One of those articles is the feature story of the July/August 2006 issue of the Witness. I hope you'll read it. I hope you'll read the entire issue! And I hope it will inspire you to plant a church. If it does, keep me posted. I'd love to do all I can to help!✞



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Brent Ross

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

I can remember so well many exciting days spent at church camp in my youth. I was a church camp "groupie." Having been raised in the great State of Maine, where we have five Advent Christian Camp Grounds, I had many opportunities to enjoy the camp atmostphere. Some of my most important spiritual decisions were made at camp. I still go to camp every summer and I'm still experiencing the presence of God in powerful ways during those precious days spent working with young people. I want to encourage you to pray for our summer camping ministries. I encourage you to pay a child's way to camp. Let's make sure that when the vans and cars head to camp this summer that "no child gets left behind!" Camps are always looking for workers, perhaps you might be able to take a week of your vacation time to minister at camp. I have a man in our church, Alf Lee, who gives three weeks of his vacation time each summer to go to camp. Each year Alf comes back enthused and excited about what God has done.

I suspect that many of you have made life-changing decisions at camp. Many of us sensed a call into the ministry at camp. There is a great need within our denomination for God to raise up the next generation of leaders. We need God to call a new generation of young people to be pastors, missionaries and church planters. I want to encourage camp evangelists to issue the challenge for our young people to consider the blessing of serving the Lord. I want to encourage camp directors to make sure that those who make commitments at camp are followed up.

In Genesis chapter 28 we find the story of Jacob having a camping experience. He was sleeping outdoors when he saw a stairway to heaven. God spoke to Jacob and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying" (Gen. 28:13). God revealed that Jacob would be well provided for. He had a future to look forward to. In verse 15, God said to Jacob, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Aren't you thankful that we serve a God who is with us and will watch over us? Aren't you glad that we worship a God who keeps his promises? God said to Jacob, "I will bring you back to this land." In Genesis 35 we see that God kept his word. God has said to you and I, "I'm coming back!" What a glorious day that will be! I'm convinced that this will happen because God always keeps his word. When Jacob woke up from his dream he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it. He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven" (Gen.28:16,17). How many times has God moved in your life at camp and you said, "Surely the Lord is in this place!" I pray that God will pour out his Spirit upon the camping ministry of our denomination this summer! I can't wait to hear reports of what God has done! May God bless each of you richly! I hope to see you at camp this summer ... ✞

God Bless!
Brent

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner

Great men sometimes make great mistakes. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) came to faith in Christ at age 32, was baptized on Easter 387, and ordained as a priest in 391. He served in Hippo Regius (Annaba, Algeria in North Africa), where he was eventually named bishop. He was a major influence in the development of Western Christendom, both Catholic and Protestant. But his theological legacy was not entirely free from error.

For a time in his ecclesiastical career, Augustine contended with the Donatists — a group of Christians who believed that many priests in the Roman Church were corrupt and unfit to baptize, celebrate Communion, etc. Their leader, Donatus, was eventually arrested and jailed. Augustine tried to justify the legal action taken against him by appealing to a parable Jesus told.[1] In doing so, he twisted the Scriptures.

The parable, in Luke 14:16-24, tells of a man who sent a servant to invite people to a great banquet. Those who heard the invitation offered all kinds of excuses why they couldn't come. The master became angry and decided to invite the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. Even after that, there was room for more. So, the master told his servant,

"Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled" (14:23 ESV).

The master represents God, or Christ, who sends out servants with the gospel to invite sinners to repentance so they can enter God's kingdom. That much is easy to grasp. But what shall we make of the command to "**compel** people to come in?" Knowing that people are converted by the communication of Biblical truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, I believe Jesus referred to the use of a compelling argument, i.e., loving *persuasion*.[2] Augustine thought "compel" justified the use of *violence* against "heretics."[3] That kind of thinking eventually led to the Roman Catholic Inquisition — a period of 700 years when "heretics," Jews, and pagans in Europe were tortured or even burned at the stake by Roman Church clergy or by government leaders at the clergy's instigation.[4] They thought that violently compelling people to forsake their error and return to the Roman fold would help those people avoid eternal torture in the Roman Catholic Hell. (We'll deal with that unbiblical idea in another article, God willing.)

Augustine lived after Emperor Constantine (272-337) who made Christianity the favored religion of the Roman Empire. The joining of Church and State in Rome and later in Europe had many unfortunate results. Eventually, the founding fathers of the American Republic would understand that government should never be linked with any particular religious group. Sadly, Augustine and some of his theological heirs couldn't see that; nor could they grasp that torturing enemies is totally opposed to the teaching and spirit of Christ. May God help us discern and avoid the great mistakes of great men — even while we may appreciate their great insights. ✞

(Footnotes)

[1] Letter 173 (A.D. 416) http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102173.htm

[2] Cf. Acts 17:2-4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

[3] A "heretic" is someone who divides a church with what is deemed false doctrine (cf. Titus 3:10-11).

[4] The Medieval Inquisition (starting in 1184) was followed by the Papal (1230s), Spanish (1478ff.), Roman (1542ff.), and Portuguese (1536ff.) Inquisitions. Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inquisition

Chaplain Tom Warner serves in retirement centers with Ministry To The Aged and also at the Idaho State Veterans Home in Boise and Meridian, Idaho.

..things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

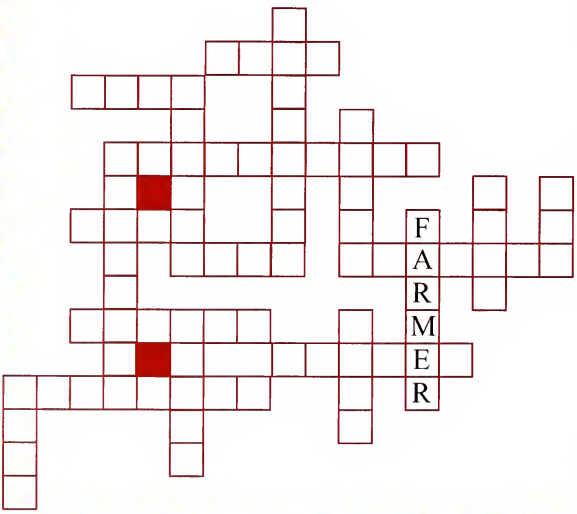
DOT TO DOT

CONNECT THE DOTS TO READ THE WORDS IN THE BIBLE VERSE AS IT IS WRITTEN IN MATTHEW 13:23 (NIV)



Crossword Puzzle

Fill in the red, underlined words from Matthew 13:3-8 (NIV). The first one is done for you.



"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."



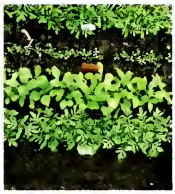
As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

Draw a line from each garden on the left to the exact matching garden on the right.



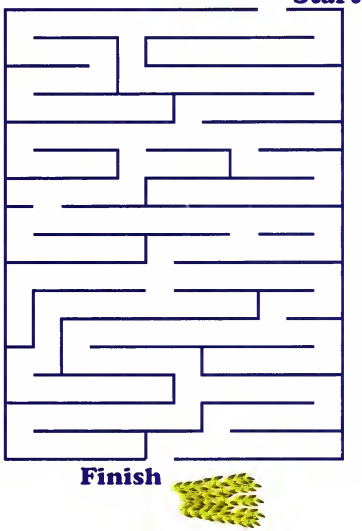






Help the farmer get to the wheat seeds





CRYPTOGRAM WORDS

"FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT"
Ephesians 522

Crack the Code. Each letter stands for another letter. Once you've found one, it stays the same through all of the words.

1. XRMODXFUGCNN
2. USZC
3. EROMCGAC
4. TSB
5. ISSWGCNN
6. ECRAC
7. PMGWGCNN
8. ICGOUCGCNN
9. NCUX-ASGOYSU

VOLUNTEER WARFARE

BY DUSTIN BUCHANAN



Dustin Buchanan is currently working on the Summer Ministries Team for the Appalachian Region. He will be a Junior at Concord University, working on a dual degree in Chemistry/Biology with plans to apply for Medical School. He is a member of the AC Church in Princeton, W.Va.

TODAY WAS THE BEST DAY ... the hardest, but the best. Volunteering my time for a few days on a service project with a group from my college, the task at hand was to feed the hungry and homeless in our nation's capital.

Our first two days of service were located in the DC Central Kitchen*, a gathering warehouse for the donation of food items from grocery stores, restaurants, etc. My job was preparing the salad. For several hours, my contribution was to cut up carrots, celery, peppers, and tomatoes for the salads. Over the course of two days, we prepared a WHOLE LOT of salad ... and then we left. I remember thinking ... "I sure hope my efforts were worth something, but I guess I may never know."

But today was different. My station of service took me to a place called S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat)** Wow! Both homelessness and hunger became real to me. Hundreds of hungry men and women came into the dining hall, and all of them received a hot plate of food. The tables were lined with pitchers of cold water. As they sat down, enjoying the meal and laughing with their friends, I intently observed.

Today, the problem of hunger became alive as I entered the battle. I acknowledged it as an enemy and became personally involved in the fight. I have given money to combat hunger through my church and school, but that was from a distance, almost like being a member of the artillery. These soldiers are important in the battle but they are stationed a distance from the intense conflict.

During my day at S.O.M.E., I experienced real homelessness. It was like serving in the infantry — getting my hands dirty in the actual warfare. He wanted to know what school I was from ... he wanted to know if I volunteered for this ... he had been to my home state of West Virginia and while there, he had seen hawks and falcons in the wild,

*DC Central Kitchen — As part of its Food Recycling and Meal Distribution programs, the Kitchen re-prepares surplus food from area food service businesses to provide meals to community agencies throughout the DC metropolitan area. DCCK recovers close to 3,000 lbs. of food a day while providing nearly 4,000 meals a day to more than 110 community partnerships. For more information go to www.amizade.org/Countries/Partnerships/DC.htm

**SOME — Founded in 1970 by a group of priests and ministers, SOME began as a "soup kitchen." SOME is an interfaith organization, made up of community-based volunteers and staff from offices or businesses who believe serving the poor is everyone's job. SOME provides 1,200 meals a day to hungry and homeless children, men and women. SOME has evolved into a comprehensive social service agency with a twofold mission: to meet people's immediate needs and to help them overcome the barriers that keep them homeless and destitute. For more information, go to www.some.org

which he thought were the coolest birds ever. I asked him if he wanted coffee. Before today, hunger wasn't real to me ... now it is.

I saw men and women come through the line for a second and third helping and thought to myself, "How in the world can they eat another plate of food? I would be stuffed!" But, then again, I had breakfast ... two, actually ... and supper the night before and lunch before that. How blessed am I?

Infantry verses artillery. Both are important, both serve a purpose. I think I have become a better artillery soldier because I have experienced the infantry. Like many other social problems, we never see them clearly until we have the opportunity to get "up close and personal" in the battle. When we enter the combat, we begin to see the face of our enemy in a new light.

As I reflect on my experiences, I realize that the time spent cutting those vegetables for the salad was needed, but what a difference it made to actually put a face to the people who would be consuming those salads. I have been in the artillery for most of my life, serving from a distance, giving money to help. Praying. But this experience has encouraged me to look for other areas of service ... maybe short-term mission work or volunteering in my own community where I can have some hands-on experiences.

I guarantee it will make you cut carrots in a whole new way!✞



"LOOKING BACK TO SEE GOD... LOOKING AHEAD TO SERVE"



By Libby Houck

Sometimes we have to look in the rearview mirror to see God's hand at work. So it was in my life. Years ago, when my daughter Teresa was just starting school, I was looking forward to being a stay-at-home mom, but God had other plans. About a month before school was to begin, I received a call from our pastor's wife, Mrs. Batson, who was the manager of the cafeteria where my daughter would start school. Her part-time helper had quit suddenly, and she was in need of immediate help. She expressed her confidence in my ability to perform the duties of the job as well as my dependability to show up for work, and asked if I would consider the job. After my husband and I talked it over, we came to the conclusion that it was the ideal job, since I would be at the same school with our daughter and would have time off in the summer months with her. So I decided to give it a try.

Like all jobs, we had requirements, and I set out to learn the following:

Dress Code

1 The first requirement was the "dress code." The policy was "all white … clothes and shoes." Many times I would have to run errands on my way home from work, and some people would ask if I was a nurse. Other times, when dressed in regular clothes, I would meet children from the school and hear them exclaim, "Mrs. Houck, you have **clothes** on!"

In our Christian walk, God has a particular "dress code" also. Ephesians 6:11 states that we are to put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Follow the Recipe

2 The second requirement of the job was in relation to the recipes. The food service director provides you with the plan and the ingredients.

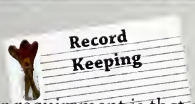
Regardless of how many times you may have created the same menu item at home, you were required to follow a specific recipe while at work. I recall one of my first attempts at making rolls. How hard could that be? I mixed the ingredients, set them aside to rise in a warm place, and went on with other preparations for lunch. When I checked on the rolls about 30 minutes later, I discovered a problem. I had forgotten to add the yeast. Fortunately, I was able to fix this disaster and the children were not disappointed that day.

In our Christian walk, God has given each of us his recipe for living found in his holy word. As we follow his plan, including all the necessary ingredients, then we can be sure the finished product will be pleasing.



3 A third requirement is that we must "taste" anything that we have fixed before serving it. That is to insure that it is edible (with no ingredients omitted). Then, if a child should happen to ask us if a particular item is good, we can always answer honestly.

"O, taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8). Before we can tell others of the Lord's goodness, we must have experienced it for ourselves.



4 Another requirement is that of record-keeping. We are expected to count every item according to serving size, keeping an account **before** and **after** we serve.

On the day of judgment, we will be expected to give an account of our time.

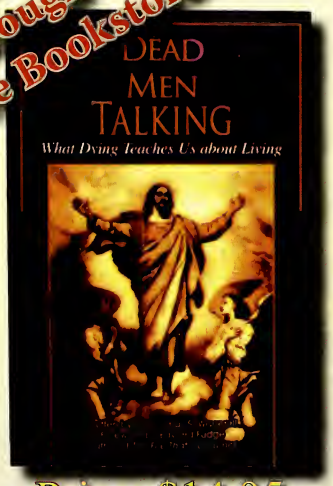
As the years have passed, I have had the opportunity to share the workload with many people. I have always tried to help them along by relating all the mistakes I made when I was the "new kid on the block." I remember a time when I was mixing the rolls, but I had forgotten to check the speed of the mixer before turning it on. Needless to say, that recipe was short some flour! It was all over the place — all over me, the floor, the manager's desk, etc. Never again did I turn the mixer on before checking the speed.

Twenty-five years have passed, and as I look back, I can see God's plan. From the very beginning, I was always wanting to help grandmother in the kitchen. I would stand on a chair and watch. I remember the little pieces of dough she would allow me to work with so I would have something of my own to bake. That "little piece of dough" was just the beginning.

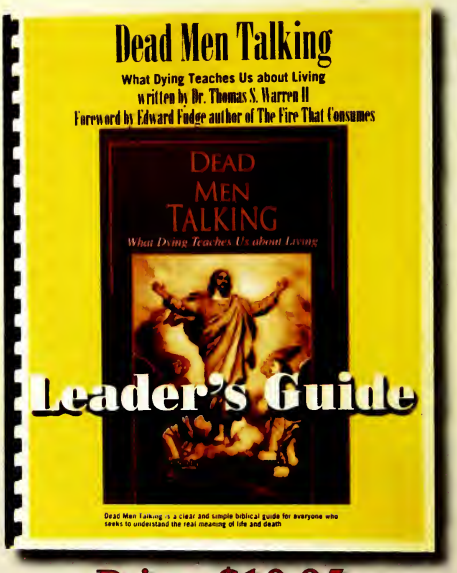
I have found this job to touch my heart. What began as part-time eventually grew to a full work week. Through the years, I have seen all kinds of children — some with more than they know what to do with, some in the middle class with all that they need and wishing for more and some that have very little. I have seen kids with a mom and a dad, some with only a mom or a dad and others that answer to multiple sets of parents. Regardless of their circumstances, they all need one thing above all else — the love of God. They all hunger for love and attention, and God has placed me in their path *"for such a time as this."*✝

Elizabeth (Libby) Houck has been a member of the Bethel Advent Christian Church in Lenoir, N.C. since she was 16 years old. She has served in the local church as Sunday school teacher, children's leader and WH-FMS Spiritual Life Chairman and Treasurer. She has also served as the King's Jewels leader for the Piedmont Conference of the Appalachian Region. Libby is married to Curtis and has one daughter, Teresa, and one grandson, Caleb.

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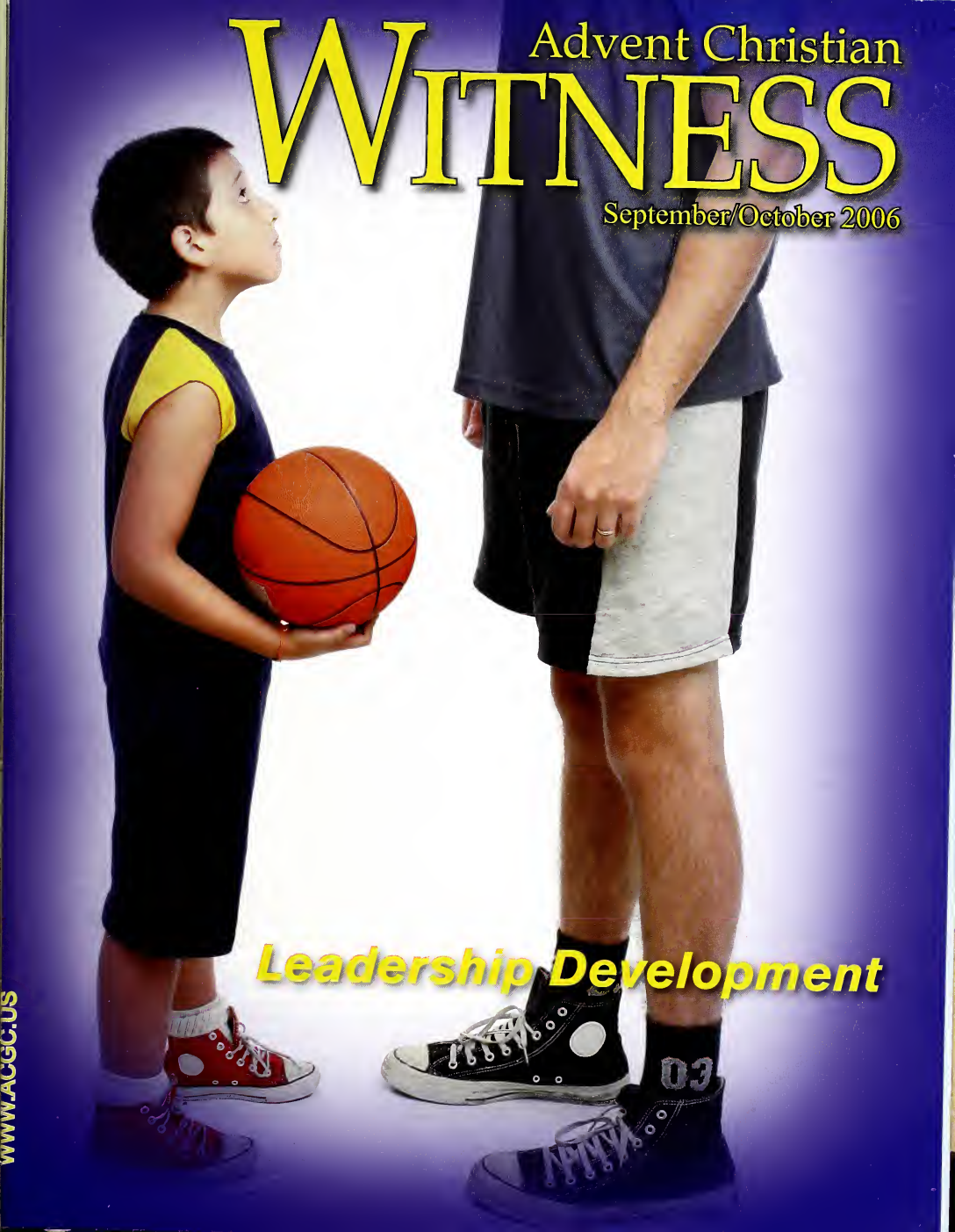
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From the Editor



I tried looking up "leadership development" in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to see what the Bible had to say on this issue's theme subject; but the words just weren't there. The NIV Compact Concordance has four references to "leadership" (Numbers 33:1; Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20; and Romans 12:8), but nowhere in Scripture is it combined with the word "development." I was almost tempted to write that we were dealing with a subject about which the Bible had nothing to say, but I realized that it would be foolish to say that. However, much of the Bible is devoted to leadership development, even if the translators don't use the modern "buzz words."

What do you suppose Jesus was doing when he "ordained 12 men, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14)? Wasn't that leadership development?

Biblical leadership development wasn't about going to school — though that concept is not foreign to the Bible (cf. 2 Kings 4:38; John 7:15; Acts 4:13; Acts 22:3; etc.). It was about people spending time with Jesus, in such proximity that they could learn how to do the things he did by watching him. The Son of God **developed** the future **leaders** of his movement by **leading** them, as a shepherd leads sheep, then

(Editorial continued on page 25)

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LEAD ON!

By Thomas "Sam" Warren II

I have heard it said many times, "We need more leaders!" On many occasions, I have listened as people prayed for the raising up of new leaders. Perhaps I'm missing something — but, as I travel across our denomination, it appears to me that God is answering our prayers regarding leadership, and a new question has emerged as the priority. The question is simply, "Will we acknowledge those whom God is calling and will we follow their lead?" In other words, "Are we willing to trust those whom he has called?" This is a more important question than one might think. What good will it do if God raises up new leadership and no one is willing to recognize and follow them?

The process of identifying leaders is not that hard. As John Maxwell says, "If you think you are a leader and no one is following you, you're just taking a walk." A real leader is someone who gets things done with and through people. Rather than



proclaiming that he or she is a leader, he or she is identified by his or her leading. But exactly where does a real leader come from? Perhaps an illustration will help.

Max Lucado tells the following story in his book titled, "In the Grip of Grace ..." He writes, "As youngsters, we neighborhood kids would play street football. The minute we got home from school, we'd drop the books and hit the pavement. The kid across the street had a dad with a great arm and a strong addiction to football. As soon as he'd pull in the driveway from work we'd start yelling for him to come and play ball. He couldn't resist. Out of fairness he'd always ask, 'Which team is losing?' Then he would join that team, which often seemed to be mine. His appearance in the huddle changed the whole ball game. He was confident, strong and most of all, he had a plan. We'd circle around him, and he'd look at us and say, 'OK, boys, here is what we are going to do.' The other side was groaning before we left the huddle. You see, we not only had a new plan, we had a new leader."



When one thinks about leadership, the question of "who's the boss?" arises. However, the question "Who ought to be boss?" is like asking, "Who ought to be the tenor in the quartet?" Obviously, the man who can sing tenor! If I may borrow this analogy and apply it to the ministry of the church, we have far too many people singing tenor that can't sing tenor. In some cases, they can't sing at all. One might ask, "How can we expect the church to function as God intended when we aren't even capable of singing on key?"

Last year, I completed the reading of a book written by Leonard Sweet titled, "Summoned to Lead." The heart of this book deals with the question of how one becomes a leader. In the past, I have heard people talk about leadership, and I have read a lot of material on the idea that leaders are made; that is, they aren't born naturally to be a leader. My experience, however, tells me that there are people with certain personality traits and giftedness who seem to be perfectly fitted for some type of leadership role. On the other hand, there are some people who become tremendous leaders after going through very difficult situations. In these cases, it would appear that much of their shaping comes from the "crisis" times in their lives. They had to fight for survival, but through it all they were made stronger and wiser. It would seem that leaders are both born and made. Sweet presents the idea that while leaders are both born and made, most leaders are "summoned" into service. This type of leader hears the call to step forward and makes a difference. Sweet bases his discussion concerning leadership on the December 5, 1914, Trans-Antarctic Expedition led by Sir Ernest Shackleton, who sailed from the island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic Ocean. Its goal was the first overland crossing of Antarctica. A similar expedition, led by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, began on August 3, 1913, to explore the frozen Arctic between the

northernmost shores of Canada and the North Pole. Both ships, the "Karluk" in the north and the "Endurance" in the south, soon found themselves stuck in solid ice. Each crew was soon engaged in a fight for survival. But the outcomes of these two adventures — and the ways in which the two leaders dealt with the obstacles they faced — were as far apart as the poles the two leaders had set out to explore. In the months that followed, the crew of the "Karluk" — in the north — found themselves transformed into a band of self-interested, disparate individuals. Lying, cheating and stealing became common behaviors. The disintegration of the team had tragic consequences for its 11 members who died in the Arctic wasteland. In the frozen south, the story of the "Endurance" could not have been more different. Shackleton's expedition faced the same problems of ice, cold, and shortages of food and supplies. The response of his crew to these hellish conditions, however, was in almost every respect the opposite of those of the "Karluk's" crew. Teamwork, self-sacrifice, and astonishing good cheer replaced lying, cheating and rapacious self-interest. It was as if the "Endurance" existed not just in a different polar region, but in a different, contrary, parallel universe ("Leading at the Edge," p. xiii).

This scenario has also been played out in the life of many a church. Some churches, determined to do God's will, have set out with a plan, supplies and a group of people who wanted to reach their goal. Years later, this same church is stagnant and on the verge of closing its doors — "stuck in the ice" and unable to move. The other church, however, which began with the same goal in mind, is still growing and moving forward. Due to the circumstances of life and the many challenges that ministry can bring, the church has had to redefine its goal in terms of what God was saying to it in the midst of ministry. Nevertheless, there is excitement about what's happening in the church. Not so for the first church. There is discontentment over the church's direction and the belief that things will never get better until we get back to the way things used to be done.

Sometimes it appears that in order to move forward, the leader must help the church (or any organization) to make it through the "crisis" in order to be able to continue toward the ultimate goal. The church, therefore, must deal with the bumps along the way in order to keep moving toward the effective communication of the gospel in a sinful world and the raising up of mature leaders committed to serving the Lord, regardless of the situation.

True leadership development begins when leaders are allowed to lead.

This type of leader is defined by Sweet as one who can hear the voice and respond in the affirmative. They don't lead simply because they have taken a class on leadership or even because they used to know a leader, but because they hear God calling them forward or summoning them to lead. Shackleton did exactly that in leading the crew of the "Endurance" to safety back home. Little would have been gained if he had lost his crew in his attempt to reach the goal. In the same way, nothing is gained if the leader of a church keeps pushing forward toward a goal, but loses everyone else along the way. Amazingly, Shackleton did not lose one member of his 27-member crew. They lived to sail again. How many people will we need to lose along the way, as we go about doing the ministry of the Lord, before we learn that there is another way?

I believe in the gift of leadership as listed by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans, and I agree that leaders must lead with diligence, but in order for this to happen, the church must recognize the present and emerging leaders among us and follow their lead. True leadership development begins when leaders are allowed to lead. So, if you are being summoned to lead, **lead on!**✞

Dr. Sam Warren is the director of nurture for Advent Christian General Conference in Charlotte, N.C.

Leadership Training

by Dr. William Norwood



Rev. Hugh K. Shepard

"Let us go up and possess it, for we are well able." These were the courageous words of Caleb re-echoed in 1958 at Park-of-the-Palms, Florida. This was the keynote of the 1958 denominational cry for home missions.

General Conference accepted the call as men and women went to the altar to dedicate their lives to home missions. Rev. Hugh K. Shepard, director of evangelism, was called upon to direct and promote home missions. With rigid limitations, both in funds and qualified personnel, the mission board found this to be a difficult task. During this time, the national home mission director, with regional leadership, recommended and developed projects. Home mission projects were developed in all five regions.

As people moved from the cities to the rural areas, home missions became de-emphasized. In 1990, we found many racial and ethnic groups in the city. In 1993, a group of men serving on the home mission board met at the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury, Massachusetts. This committee met to explore an Urban Ministries Institute. The committee proposed to develop clinics, workshops, retreats and seminars to develop urban workers. Urban sites throughout the five regions were designated to host the training. Again, there was no funding to initiate the Institute.

At the 2005 General Conference Triennial Convention in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the cry went out again. "Let us go up and possess it, for we are well able." The Sanderlin Urban Ministries Fellowship was presented by the director, Dr. William Norwood. The Institute was named after A.J. Sanderlin, whose works were in Memphis, Tennessee. He was a precursor to much of the inner-city ministry to this day in Advent Christian ministry.

The Sanderlin Urban Ministries Fellowship (SUMF) is a work/study program designed to enhance and equip Advent Christian workers in the area of specialized Urban/Ethnic Ministry through a prescribed curriculum and on-site ministry. The student is involved by moving to the city where the instructor for a given course lives and works. The student participates in the life of the church in the city for three to six months, while taking the course taught by that instructor. Upon completion of one course, the student may then move on to another city to take another course from another instructor. When the student has completed all of the courses (which may take two or three years), the student then becomes a Sanderlin Urban Ministries Fellow and is better prepared to serve the Lord in an inner-city setting.

Leadership training is necessary in an urban setting today. Students who have a calling for urban/ethnic ministry are needed in our inner-city churches. Will we answer the call of Caleb in the year 2006?✞

Dr. Bill Norwood served over 35 years in the Chicago Public Schools. Currently he serves on several Boards of Directors and Advisory Boards, including ACGC Executive Council, president of Prairie States Conference and Director of the Sanderlin Institute. Dr. Norwood is a member of the Church of the Highlands in Lagrange, Illinois.

A Church Remembered

By David Hill



The old AC Church in Lynn, Mass., 1963.

Advent Christian Church Lynn, Massachusetts

It was about more than a building. It was about more than programs, meetings and schedules. It was certainly about more than getting up on Sunday morning to attend church services. It was, in fact, a story of love, example and the total surrender of lives to Jesus Christ.

This is the story of the Lynn Advent Christian Church and how I remember those far away days. The Lynn Advent Christian Church was located just north of Boston, Massachusetts. It is an institution that makes us proud of both our history and Adventual beliefs.

Built in 1879, the church had modest beginnings, being a simple chapel which housed a group of fervent Adventist believers inspired by the message of William Miller.



A.C. Johnson and George Sederquist

Great men and women of Adventual heritage ministered and led great revivals for Christ at this landmark church at 51 Liberty Street in Lynn, Massachusetts. Personalities, such as Hiram Munger, George W. Sederquist, Miriam McKinstry, J.A. Gardner and Albert C. Johnson, all spent time here preaching the word of God. Rev. Sederquist described his five years as pastor as five of the happiest years of his long ministry. He baptized a total of 198 new believers and saw great strides for the work of Jesus Christ.

At age 50, my memories are certainly more recent than this early history I have mentioned, but many of the people whom I knew, loved and respected had vivid memories of the great men and women of long ago. These great Christian people understandably drew from their example, as I, in turn, draw from the example they truly have shown day after day and week after week. The people I refer to gave a testimony for Christ that was exhibited in word and deed. The words they spoke and the lives they led showed a great commitment to their Lord and the people around them.



Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Rowell and Gladys, 1923

My own family had a deep heritage in the Lynn Church. My great-grandfather, Wilbur Rowell, was choir director at the church for a number of years. Though I never knew him personally, I heard many great and impressive words about his demeanor and witness in word and song. He was described as firm but loving, as well as a man of deep, moral conviction. He had a wonderful baritone voice and sang the praises of God. He was also a man of great wit. On one occasion the choir was singing in flat tones. In a kind and loving way, he commented, "Someone is a bit flat. I think that was you, Nella." This story was related to me by Nella Miller, a church member who was quite young at the time it happened. Today I possess his baton and music stand. His children were Mildred Austin and Gladys Rowell, my grandmother and great-aunt. I was brought up in the ways of the Lord under their efforts. I was dedicated at the Lynn Church which gave me a great start in life.



Mildred Austin and Gladys Rowell, 1963

My grandmother spoke of her faith in Christ until her dying day. She always gave of herself and her finances to her friends and family. She would always give words of love, encourage-

ment and witness. My aunt would read Bible stories from the D.C. Cook Sunday PIX and gave me my first lessons in reading. We would play and read sometimes together on my Saturday visits to their house. Both of them attended the Lynn Church faithfully for many years.

When I attended Sunday school, I became a real student of the Bible under the guidance of so many great mentors. I remember my teachers — Betty Perkins, Ethel Marshall and Freeman Barton. All three of these teachers showed me God's word by answering some difficult questions I asked and giving me my first lessons in the Bible. They inspired me to further seek the study of the Bible through higher education and, more recently, the Berkshire Christian College Theological Education and Ministry Preparation by Extension ("T.E.M.P.E.") program.



Freeman and Pauline Barton, 1964

I remember the pastorates of Cliff Olson, Ted Smith, and my good friend Carl Rundgren. Cliff Olson was a tireless worker who established the first vacation Bible school at the Lynn Church. I remember him going door to door to invite young people. We saw many new faces during those four summers at our church. Pastor Olson was caring in counseling family matters. I recall him coming to our home to help calm down a matter between my mother and her husband. Ted Smith was one of the finest speakers I remember. I enjoyed assisting him on Sundays, reading the scripture and leading the singing. Carl Rundgren I knew on a more personal basis. I remember his great humility before God and his preaching. When my aunt was dying, he visited her to talk, pray and encourage. This example left a fine impression on the family forever.



Rev. Clifford Olson, 1965



Dr. Edwin K. Gedney and Rev. Ted Smith baptizing David Hill, 1969

My special moment was that of every Christian — the day I accepted Christ — under the ministry of Ted Smith. I was baptized by a man whose name is familiar to most Advent Christians — Dr. Edwin K. Gedney. How much I looked forward to youth group, choir practice and the inspirational services of worship! The very environment of the little church on Liberty



David Hill receiving his Bible from Vina Richardson on Promotion Sunday, 1963



Odena T. Pierce, 1964

Street was so enlightened by the people around it. The Holy Spirit's presence was so evident in the years I spent there. People were happy and filled with joy. You could see that they wanted to be there. You could see the sincerity when sharing their witness. You felt a desire to feel what they were feeling — the joy and peace of Christ.

Some great lay people, though they will never be mentioned in the history books, are remembered for their ministry and caring to me. All of these people, with loud and happy statements, demonstrated Christ's presence. I remember Maurice Lohnes who was always available to furnish transportation to church for all. He was tolerant and never said a harsh word. I remember Odena Pierce, our Sunday school superintendent, who created and kept a pictorial history album of the church. I remember the love shown by Minnie Graves, Maurice and Ruth Lohnes, Rachael Rose and Edith Hinkley (who played organ and piano like concert professionals). Rachael Rose, before I attended Sunday school there, would always send me the weekly Sunday School PIX through my aunt and grandmother. I recall with great fondness one of the great men of God, our regular organist, Austeen Rose. Austeen made me happy with his wit; but, above all, I remember his sincere prayer at our weekly meetings and his gift of music on the organ.



Austeen Rose, 1968

Even Nella Miller and Mrs. Young — who lived beyond 100 years of age — and so many more I could not possibly mention at this writing, are examples that we as contemporary Christians can learn from. They sang with joy, taught Sunday school, attended church every Sunday, preached the word with conviction, always were patient and kind, and always showed genuine love to me by greeting me with a kind face and hugs (which I sometimes shyed away from). Hopefully, our young people can draw from our example as we have drawn from that of our elders.



The new AC Church in Lynn, Mass., 1964

Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20 to preach his word to the world. I know these people have fulfilled the great commission, and mansions in his Father's house await them on that final and great day.

Today the little church on Liberty Street still stands. Though the church has not been Advent Christian since 1973, other bodies of believers have worshipped here right along.

The church closed in 1973. A large thunderstorm raged that afternoon. My memories are many, and the church lives on in the spirit of what true and dedicated Christians really are. Praise God!✞

David Hill is a former member and deacon of Lynn Advent Christian Church and is presently a teacher at Eagle Height Academy Christian School in Revere, Mass.

The Strange Silence About the Resurrection in the Church

By Andy Johnson

Though the Church says plenty about Christ's resurrection, Christianity also includes another resurrection that the Church surprisingly says little about.

Our churches maintain a strange silence about the resurrection. I don't mean that we are silent about Jesus' resurrection, especially around Easter time. Like the Early Church, we affirm it wholeheartedly. But unlike the Early Church, we often consider it as God's chief miracle in a showcase of other miracles without being able to articulate why it is significance for us.

I'm not inferring that we are silent about "life after death" or "going to heaven when you die" either. While the New Testament affirms that a Christian is safe with the Lord at death (Romans 8:38-40; Philippians 1:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8), we often use sources other than the Bible—such as gospel songs and hymns—to paint pictures that go beyond what the Bible actually says happens when we die. But being safe with the Lord at death is not the ultimate hope of Christians.

Our ultimate hope is the future resurrection from the dead at Christ's return. We, like our Lord before us, will be raised from the dead. This final hope is what we are strangely silent about in our churches.

We need a good dose of the apostle Paul to loosen our silent tongues on the connection between Jesus' resurrection and our own. Paul clearly states this connection in 1 Corinthians 15:20-21: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead" (NASB).

Paul didn't say that Jesus rose from the dead so "we don't have to die" or so "our souls can go to heaven when we die." Rather, his language of "first fruits" implies that there will be "later fruits" of the same type—what happened to Christ will happen to those who have died "in Christ." First Corinthians 15:23-28 shows, these "later fruits" will be harvested all at once in the resurrection of all of God's people when Christ returns. This is when Death, as the last enemy, is finally destroyed, God's everlasting kingdom is fully established, and God becomes "all in all." In 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Paul noted a necessary connection between Christ's resurrection and our own.

This reminds us that Christ's story is our story. We visually depict this truth at baptism when we are "buried" under the waters of baptism and "rise" from them to new life (Romans 6:4). It's a promissory enactment of our later death and final resurrection. While the Gospels do have differences in their accounts of the resurrection, all four tell Christ's story in a similar way. They all affirm that an empty tomb existed, and that the One buried in the tomb was raised. They also portray Jesus' risen body as capable of being grasped and touched (Matthew 28:9; John 20:17, 27). Luke even describes it as one of "flesh and bones" (24:39) and depicts the risen Christ eating in

front of and with his disciples (Acts 1:4; 24:41-43). But our gospels certainly do not portray Jesus as simply a revived corpse. Clearly, Jesus' body had undergone a genuine transformation. In Luke and John the risen Lord suddenly appeared in the midst of his disciples fully embodied (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26) and in Luke he just as suddenly disappeared (24:31). While we don't know all of the details, Christ's resurrection in these gospels includes a complete transformation of Jesus' body even though it somehow remained a concrete, material, flesh-and-blood body.

If this is what happened to Jesus, how can something like this happen to us, particularly when Paul described the future resurrected body as a "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44)?

When Paul used the word "spiritual" in this context, it did not refer to the materials our risen bodies will be made of, as though he were describing a thin, wispy, ghost-like thing. Rather, he used "spiritual" to refer to the Holy Spirit's transformation of our current bodies, which are ravaged by the effects of sin. So by "spiritual body" Paul meant a material body wholly transformed by and filled with the Spirit, making it appropriate for the new creation, the kingdom of God.

"Now wait a minute," someone might say, "Paul says that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable' (1 Corinthians 15:50, NASB). So how can we compare our story to Jesus' story when His risen, transformed body was one of 'flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39)?"

When Paul used the phrase "flesh and blood" in 1 Corinthians 15:50, he wasn't discussing those who have died. He used the same phrase in Galatians 1:16 where he said that after God revealed his Son to him, he did not "immediately consult with flesh and blood" (NASB). In neither place was he focusing on the materials composing human bodies.

As in Matthew 16:17 (NASB), "flesh and blood" is a way to refer to frail living human beings. So in 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul refers to two different groups: living "flesh and blood" human beings and "perishable" dead human beings. Neither of these two groups can inherit the kingdom of God . . . unless they are transformed and made fit to do so at Christ's return.

The first group can be transformed by "putting on immortality" over their untransformed bodies, and the second will do so by putting on "imperishability" over their perishable or corrupted bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53-55). Only then will the final victory over death be achieved (15:55, 15:26), and God will become "all in all" (15:28).

According to Paul, what happened to Jesus will happen to us. The God who, by the Spirit, raised Jesus and transformed His body will also raise and transform our bodies so they are conformed to the form of Jesus' own risen body (Philippians 3:21). So for Christians, while we are indeed safe with the Lord between our deaths and the final resurrection, our ultimate hope isn't going to heaven when we die. Our ultimate hope is the transformation of our bodies into concrete material bodies so filled with the Spirit that they are appropriate for the new creation God is bringing.

My mom had severe rheumatoid arthritis. Although she had twenty surgeries in nineteen years, her joints remained disfigured until she died. When I meet her in God's new creation, I won't mingle my thin wispy soul with hers. I'll throw my arms around her transformed body and together we'll join all creation in praising the God who is "all in all." This is because Jesus' resurrection is the model for our resurrection, and is therefore the source of our ultimate hope. And it's time we broke our strange silence about it in the church.✞

Andy Johnson is professor of New Testament at Nazarene Theological Seminary. He lives in Overland Park, Kansas, with his with his wife and two sons, and attends Overland Park Church of the Nazarene.

(Used by permission. Holiness Today, March/April 2006.)



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Part 5

Risky Business

The challange of building a team

By Dr Thomas S. Warren II

Let Me Lead



Years ago, I was standing at the back of the sanctuary following a morning service, and a man approached me with the question, "What are we building next door?" It took me a few seconds to realize that he was asking about the construction taking place on the corner property adjacent to our church property. I knew that a major gasoline corporation was building a station there, but I was surprised to think that this man, who had been a lifelong member of the church, knew so little about our ministry that he thought the church was building a new building.

After telling him about the construction taking place, he simply said, "Okay, I was just wondering." That experience has remained lodged in my memory for years and caused me to consider a fundamental issue facing the church — the issue of corporate involvement (or, stated another way, **the lack of laity participation in the overall ministry of the local church).**

You've heard it said many times that lay involvement in the local church is a key to its growth and effectiveness in ministry. It is also true that a leader who bypasses the pivotal role of the laity in the overall ministry of the church is doomed to mediocrity. In an article titled, "No One Leads Alone," Bill Donahue writes, **"Leaders must rely on others and learn from others too!"** According to Donahue, leaders who act as if they know it all, take a position of "leave me alone" and "I can fix it alone" and are destined to violate the intended "body life" described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:16.

> ***"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its part."***

I can remember vividly the feeling I had years ago when I was asked to become the pastor of a particular church. My wife and I prayed diligently and faithfully over the decision to relocate and assume the position of senior pastor. I was thrilled with the thought of becoming their leader.

My excitement faded quickly after arriving at the church and discovering that my understanding of what it meant to lead was different from the culture of the church. For the church, leading meant that I preached and visited the sick. My thoughts on leading included the active participation of the laity in carrying out the ministry of the church according to their giftedness, skill and passion while I, too, pursued God's call upon my life. Together we would accomplish God's will for the church.

Memories of me entering a board meeting with the feeling that it was "me against them" still linger. Would they approve of what I had done this month? Were my sermons pleasing? Had I visited enough of the "right" people? Had I earned enough ministerial currency to present any new ideas about the work of the church that wouldn't be shot down because it wasn't the way we did things

around here? I soon learned that this approach to doing the work of the ministry was doomed to failure. Unless we changed and became a team, there was little hope for the future of our ministry together.

Becoming a team is not easy work, but it can be achieved. If leaders don't care who receives the credit, it can be done. If the laity and pastoral leaders can submit to one another, it can be accomplished. Their goal must be the same. A church that is unwilling to do the hard work of becoming a team is destined to live in crisis and never achieve God's best for them.



I learned a very valuable lesson concerning this many years ago while playing basketball on a church team. Like many "want-to-be" athletes, I am aggressive on the court. On this particular night, I received a technical foul for my over-zealous play. After the game, as we were exiting the gym, my wife made a comment to me about my play, and I responded in a way that was rude and disrespectful (to say the least).

The second I made the comment, the air became very thick with tension. I knew it was wrong, but the damage had been done. Nothing happened right then, as we all went home. However, the ride home proved to be a fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to work on my heart. I realized that I had hurt my wife, and for that I was very repentant. I apologized to her and reaffirmed to her that I would try never to do that again; yet I knew that there was more to do.

Standing around me during this incident were men that I loved and in whom I had invested a great deal of relational time. We were getting close to each other and to the Lord. This was especially true with a man named Paul. I knew that I had some unfinished business with my friend, so I called him, and here's what I said,

> **"Paul, you know that what I did and said to my wife was wrong. If that ever happens again, you have my permission and, in fact, are responsible for confronting me with my action. I need you on my team to help me be like Christ."**

I'm thankful that Paul agreed to be my friend and partner in ministry, not only for the work of the church, but for the work that God was doing in my personal life. Interestingly, a year or so later Paul came to me for help regarding sin in his life. He knew he could depend on me and my help. He knew it because we were on the same team.

After having these types of encounters in the ministry, I have often wondered why so many churches never achieve a sense of teamwork. It only takes a short time to determine whether or not a church is becoming a team. If one listens to the way people talk and the kinds of ministries they are involved in through the church, a clear understanding of what's happening in the church can be determined. Unfortunately, many churches are dysfunctional when it comes to working as a team, but there is hope for a better way.



Clearing the Way

Ask any running back in the NFL about the importance of having good blockers in front of him as he makes his way to the end zone. Without them, his journey would be futile. Ask any person in ministry about the process of building an effective team, and they, too, will often speak of the obstacles that must be overcome.

If churches are going to become effective in ministry, they must build an effective team through the strategic involvement of the laity in the work of the ministry. In order to accomplish this, certain things which tend to block this process must be dealt with in order to reach the collective goal of the church. Without this, it's three downs and punt over and over again.

Patrick Lencioni, the author of "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team," provides some helpful insight into how an effective team can be built by dealing with those things that often prevent churches and organizations from acting like a team. Lencioni notes that the following barriers are often found when a team is dysfunctional:

- **The Absence of Trust -** trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group.
- **Fear of Conflict -** recognizing that conflict is not only a reality of ministry, but that it is necessary. A good team recognizes potential conflict issues and demonstrates a willingness to talk about them.
- **Lack of Commitment -** this happens when there is a lack of clarity and buy-in to where the team is headed.
- **Avoidance of Accountability –** the inability of the team to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team.
- **Inattention to Results -** the tendency to care about something else other than collective goals.

Becoming a functional church (in terms of God's plan) often seems contrary to our ways of thinking. We want God's will as long as we can be in control of the plan, but to adopt a plan that seems quite often to violate common sense to us is almost impossible. In his most recent book (titled, "Dream Releasers"), Wayne Cordeiro reminds us of the oxymoronic nature of God's way when he writes,

Want to receive? Give.
Want to be first? Go last.
Want to save your life? First, lose it.
Want to get even? Forgive.
Want to be great? Be the servant of all.

Each of these elements can be found at the core of relationships that are built around Christ. This pattern of love between leaders and the people God has placed around them in ministry is filled with risk, but the risk is worth it.

Great leaders are willing to take this risk, and in so doing are able to build great teams. Leaders throughout the Bible are surrounded by men and women who are given the opportunity by their leader to lead with them. Reggie McNeal declares,

> **"One reason these leaders were supported by great teams centers on the special dynamic between leader and coworker. The leader belonged to them. The team knew that the leader saw them as his first line of ministry constituency. The leader shared his own life with them. Great leaders still do all three."**

Finding leaders who are willing to be used by God in this way is challenging. The temptation is to build the ministry around oneself and one's own agenda, rather than being used by God to develop others who will partner with the leader in achieving God's plan for the church.

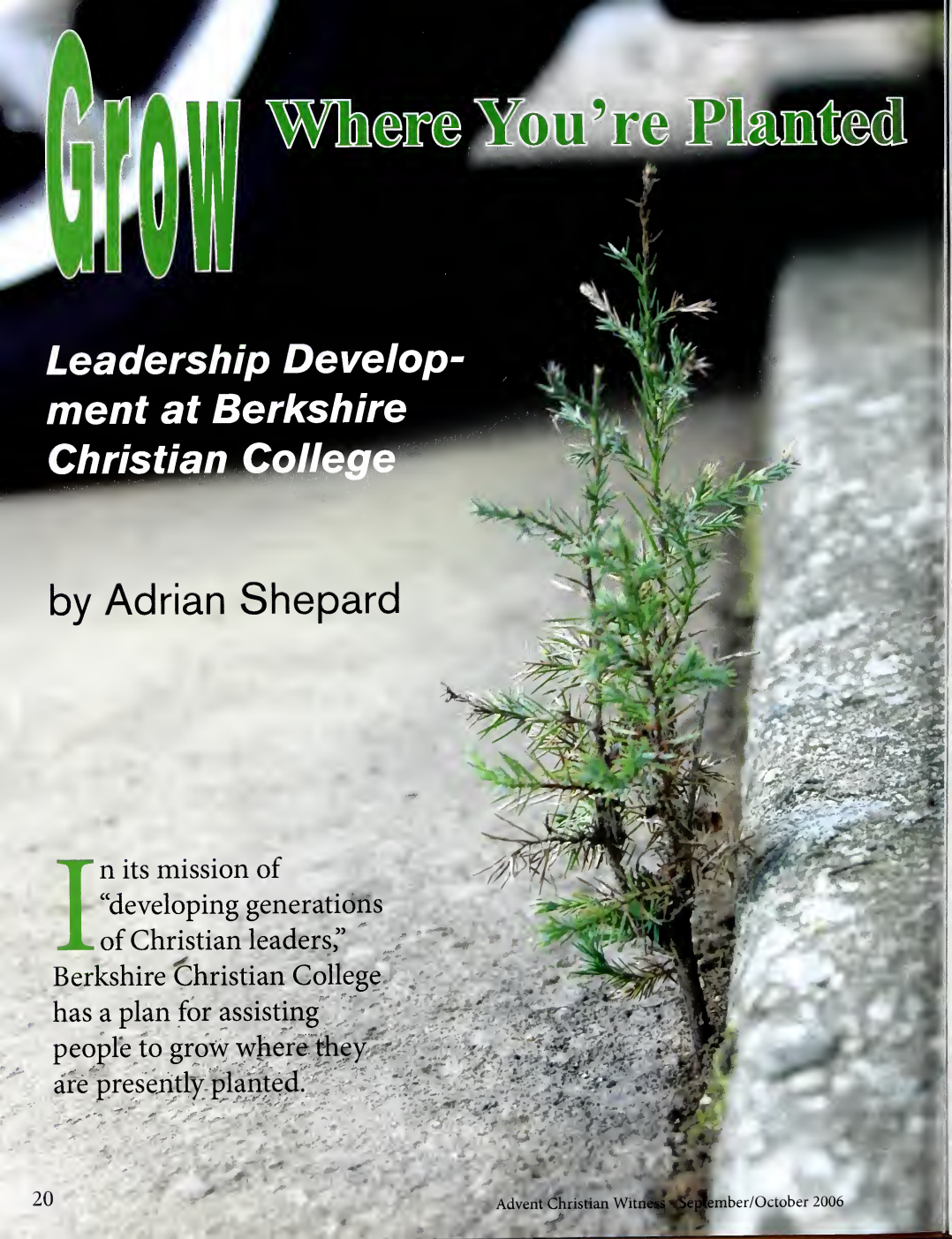
Perhaps the best place to begin is by praying that God will forgive us for trying to run the church and help us to create a team of leaders and laity that not only understands his will, but actively carries it out in the world. Richard Kriegbaum wrote these words in his recent book, "Leadership Prayers," and my prayer is that his words might become the prayer of every leader and the experience of every church:

> **"Help me remember, God, that I can be reassigned, neutralized, or eliminated for a thousand different reasons at any moment. My leadership is precarious, hanging by the silver thread of people's trust in me. Countless things over which I have no control can break that thread, including your call elsewhere, and I will be gone.**
>
> **"But they need a leader, and when I am gone they must have others to turn to, others whom they trust, who can tell them the truth. Show me those who can lead after me and better than me. Ruffle my spirit when they are near, quicken my heart when I feel their power, and open my eyes to see the special effect they have on people.**
>
> **"Protect me from preserving my own position or power or perspectives at the expense of future leaders. When they point out where I have not led well, shut my mouth and open my heart. Help me make it safe for them to try new things. Let me touch the spirit of those who possess the heart of a servant. I want to know them and love them and watch energy flow into others around them. I want to claim them for this work and pray them into my place.**
>
> **"I will not have the privilege of choosing who will lead after me. Others will decide that. But I can help prepare leaders, and I can help the organization be ready for them.**
>
> **"Show me the ones who challenge me, the ones with more freedom and stronger faith than I have. Point out the ones who love people better than I do, who lead because they really care about people. Make the spiritual giants visible to me. Let me notice the ones who attract loyal, high-quality friends.**
>
> **"Help me distinguish between the confident and the arrogant, between the humble and the hesitant. Bring out the strong ones who can carry their own burdens and also the burdens of others. Allow tough times that will yield success to those who refuse to give up. Help me advance the leaders for the future."**✞
>
> *(Reprinted from "Leadership Prayers" by Richard Kriegbaum, copyright 1998, with permission from Tyndale House,)*

Grow Where You're Planted

Leadership Development at Berkshire Christian College

by Adrian Shepard



In its mission of "developing generations of Christian leaders," Berkshire Christian College has a plan for assisting people to grow where they are presently planted.

This can be done through independent study courses or in local learning centers where 12 or more students join together in a growth experience. Either way, students study under able teachers who are carefully chosen to lead students deeply into biblical studies.

T.E.M.P.E. (**T**heological **E**ducation and **M**inistry **P**reparation by **E**xtension) is what we call our plan for developing new generations of Christian leaders. You can grow through studies such as Basics of Christian Theology, Christianity through the Ages, Advent Christian Theology, Dealing with Church Conflict, Introduction to New Testament Greek, Great Doctrines, Church Growth in Action and other stimulating subjects. All T.E.M.P.E. studies and a description of each are available through the contacts listed below.

T.E.M.P.E. is designed to meet a number of different needs. One person, with whom I talked recently and who has taken a number of courses, has begun to use the training in the Sunday school setting and through part-time preaching in her local church. She is planted presently in her local church and is growing in service to her church.

One **T.E.M.P.E.** alumnus, John Middlewood, is planting a church in Thailand. He added the Personal Enrichment Program to his already impressive educational pursuits. Rather than going elsewhere for his training, he grew where he was planted and planting. The growing mission church had almost 200 in attendance for the 2005 Christmas program.

Rev. Mary Roller, who completed 10 courses and earned a certificate, has said, "The teachers make all the difference in the **T.E.M.P.E.** program. The pastoral studies professors are all top-notch, and they know their subject matter. It would be hard to find this depth of teaching on Advent Christian doctrine and history anywhere else. The general course work was excellent. The Greek language study was especially helpful. It takes time to work through studies by mail, but I found it well worth the effort." She serves as pastor in a mission congregation and as an associate pastor in her local church.

Many of our finest Advent Christian students attend many different colleges and universities around the country and abroad. **T.E.M.P.E.** is a way some of those have augmented their studies to include Advent Christian history and thought. It is also a way that those new to the Christian faith or new to the Advent Christian Church may find adequate resources for growth in general faith or in specifics of church history and thought.

If you want to grow where you are presently planted, please reach us through one of the following ways. (1) infobcc5@aol.com (2) 978-372-8122 (3) Berkshire Christian College, P.O. Box 826, Haverhill, Mass. 01831. We encourage you to take a visit to Berkshire Christian College at www.berkshire.edu✞

Independent Study Courses- TEMPE
Self-directed college level *courses* address issues faced by pastors and lay leaders. Assigned Academic advisors assist students and evaluate assignments and exams. Courses can be taken for personal enrichment or as part of a Certificate Program. Each course requires approximately 150 hours of study and 800+ pages of reading. A short research paper is required.

Local Learning Centers- TEMPE
TEMPE courses are available with a classroom experience at various church, and campground locations. Each course consists of forty-five hours of classroom instruction, assignments, exams and reading. Locations and courses vary. Contact *InfoBCC5@aol.com* for information or call **978-372-8122.**

Certificate Programs- TEMPE
Two certificate programs are offered by Berkshire Christian College for Pastors and Church Leaders. Students must complete their certification registration and successfully complete the independent study courses and research required for the certificate program.

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner

Will condemned sinners be consigned to everlasting conscious torment? Many fine Christians think so. I believe they've misinterpreted Scripture. Let's look at one example.

A radio preacher, teaching from Mark 9:47-48, said, "If no other place in the Bible taught eternal suffering in hell, I'd have to believe it because of what Jesus says here" —

> *And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."*[1]

That radio preacher may not have known that Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 66:22-24 — *"For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me," says the LORD, "so shall your offspring and your name remain. … And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."*

Isaiah spoke of "dead bodies," **not** "immortal souls."[2] The undying worm and unquenchable fire are agents of destruction; they represent God's wrath finishing off unrepentant sinners. The symbolism comes from a garbage dump where maggots and fire consume everything cast into it.[3] God's opposition to evil (symbolized by maggots and fire) continues forever;[4] but that doesn't mean condemned sinners will continue forever.

The unsaved will be raised, judged, and then experience the **second death** (Revelation 20:11-15). Some will suffer longer than others, according to what each deserves (Luke 12:47-48), but each one's punishment will culminate in **death** (Romans 6:23). They'll be **burned up** (Malachi 4:1; Matthew 3:12). God will **destroy both soul and body in hell** (Matthew 10:28).

Mark 9:47-48 (and a few other verses) may appear, at first glance, to support the eternal suffering view, but a careful study of the entire Bible[5] points to the fact that condemned sinners will literally **perish** (John 3:16). If you are not trusting God's Son to save you from the coming wrath, repent of your sins, ask God for mercy and forgiveness, and confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Avoiding hell is even more important than correctly interpreting what Scripture says about it.

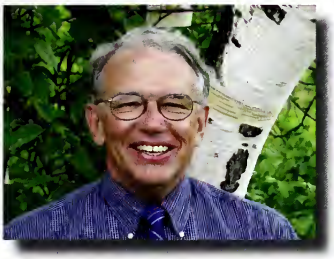
(Footnotes)

[1] Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (2001 Crossway Bibles).

(continued on page 25)

"...things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable peopl twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

Leadership Development at the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies



By Steve Brown, President
(Pictured left)

Assessing leadership potential begins and ends in the local church. Strictly speaking, the academy (a college, seminary or — in the case of BICS — a Bible institute) at best can assist local churches in affirming the motivated abilities of young believers they have identified who show promise for success in serving God's people.

Furthermore, leadership development is best conceived as moving on a continuum, understanding that God, over time, uses a variety of means and mentors to equip people to use their gifts successfully in the evangelism and edification functions in his kingdom-building enterprise. In that framework, the academy may come alongside the church in a helping role, but never substitute or supplant the work God has commissioned the body of Christ to perform.

Therefore, BICS has identified its mission as one of "building disciples," which suggests only that the Institute is one of many ways God may use to direct young believers to either vocational service in the church or a lifetime commitment to serving a local church from whatever vocational platform they desire. BICS wants to be useful in pointing young adults to service and possible leadership roles if their gifts, skill sets and motivations suggest future success and good outcomes. We prefer not to claim that leaders are "developed" here, but, rather, that they are pointed toward leadership by their identified gifts. The church, not BICS, must make a final assessment.



Theology class at BICS

Does that mean we are dispassionate about and disengaged from developing leaders? Not at all! We make every effort to help our students assess their giftedness. Yet we find obstacles and hindrances to achievement, principally in the unordered and chaotic lives young people have suffered, as the side effects of postmodernism evidenced in Western cultural values. Principally, the conflicts fester and multiply within the disarray of broken homes as well as personal moral failure, the secularism of public education and the lack of instruction and guidance by home churches and youth groups.



2006 BICS graduates

That is why we believe that before leaders can develop, they need to know and experience heart-renovation by the internal work of the Holy Spirit and the external application of biblical truth and ethics. At the inauguration

(continued on page 25)



Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Brent Ross

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

A few months ago, I had the privilege of attending five graduations. Graduation from kindergarten was a big step for me, but these folks were graduating from high school, graduate school and law school. What a tremendous achievement this was for each person involved! This year 10 young people, who are part of our church youth group, graduated from high school. I couldn't help but give thanks for our Sunday school teachers — and our youth pastor, Rev. Lynn Barnard — who have faithfully taught these folks the word of God. Our graduates are outstanding young men and women. One, A.J. Smith, was valedictorian of his class. I can't tell you how proud I am of A.J. and the others who graduated. I'm grateful for their academic achievements, but I'm especially thankful for their Christian lives.

As I reflected on these young people, I thought back to those who have touched my life and provided guidance for me — men like Uncle Herman, who wasn't my uncle, but my Sunday school teacher — and faithfully taught me the word of God. Another dynamic influence upon me was Uncle Baden Frewin — he, too, wasn't my uncle — who was more like a grandfather. Uncle Baden encouraged the youth of my home church in Waterville, Maine, to use our musical talents for the Lord. Rev. Clint Taber was pastor during my formative years. He used my love for sports to gain my attention, and then he encouraged me to think about investing my life in something even more fulfilling than sports.

Pastor Taber taught some of us young guys how to prepare a sermon, and then he actually listened while we delivered our message. I still am nervous if I am speaking and he is present. During my senior year of college, I did my internship under the tutelage of Rev. Steve Brown in Manchester, N.H. Steve put me through the paces. In eight weeks, I preached eight times, read 16 books, wrote three newsletters, taught the midweek service four times, made 20 calls a week with the visitation and met with the Tuesday morning prayer group at 5:30 a.m. Through Steve's influence, I discovered that the ministry is hard work and the most rewarding work in the world.

You have probably guessed where I am going with this column. Leadership development is a big topic, but it's something all of us can do. There are some young people in your church and in your neighborhood who could use a word of encouragement. Why not intentionally invest in some young person today? As a pastor, I want to say thanks to all of the pastors, Sunday school teachers, children's leaders, camp workers and youth sponsors for all that you are doing for the Lord. One day you will have the opportunity of knowing that your labor in the Lord was not in vain.

Of course, the best place for leadership development is in the home. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for praying for me and believing in me, even when you saw my report cards! I pray for each mom and dad reading this column, "May God help you to raise your children to love the Lord and to serve him with all their hearts! In Jesus Name. Amen!"

God Bless!
Brent Ross

(Editorial continued from page 3)

authorizing them to go out and **lead** others in the same Way.

L.D., Jesus-style, is a good part of what ACGC has been stressing for well over a dozen years under the name of "disciple-making." Much of this issue of the Witness is about leadership development in the Advent Christian Church as it is now and as we envision it might be in the near future (if Jesus doesn't return before the magazine is printed, as I hope he will). Some of the articles will be on other topics. I hope all of them will be helpful as the Lord **develops you** into a **leader** for work in his kingdom.

My own philosophy of leadership is deeply intertwined with the concept of **servanthood.** I recognize that any effort I make to **lead** through these pages will be wasted unless I do it from a platform of **service** to the needs and interests of our readers. I'd love to hear your comments (positive or negative) about the direction the magazine has taken since I've been editor. I'd especially enjoy hearing suggestions about what you'd like to see in future issues.

Please contact me at:
John Roller, PO Box 23152, Charlotte, NC 28227
1-800-676-0694 ext. 250; FAX 1-704-573-0712
E-Mail (my favorite method): jroller@acgc.us.

I hope you enjoy this issue!✞

(BICS continued from page 23)

of a young Christian's formal, post-high school training, BICS seeks to help him or her identify the inner conflicts that hinder potential for success and show them God's prescription for good outcomes through personal acquisition of his wisdom and its application in the family, the church, and society.

In this sense, BICS can assist the church in developing leaders.✞

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(Twisted Scriptures continued from page 22)

[2] Immortality will be given only to the saved, at their future resurrection (Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians15:50-54).
[3] The very word Jesus used for "hell" ("*Gehenna*") was the name of a valley on the south side of Jerusalem that was a garbage dump. Christ used it as a symbol of the future fiery destruction of the lost.
[4] Jeremiah 17:27 speaks of unquenchable fire in Jerusalem: "*...I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.*" That fire would not be quenched until it burned up everything God intended (cf. Jeremiah 52:12-14). One might view the fire of Mark 9:48 the same way, or it may refer to God's fiery glory (Exodus 19:18; 33:18-20; Matthew 16:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:8; Hebrews 12:29). Only those who are raised in glorified, immortal bodies will be able to survive the full revelation of that glory.
[5] For an excellent study of everything the Bible says about final punishment, see "The Fire That Consumes" by Edward Fudge. Order from Venture Bookstore, 1-800-676-0694, ext. 251.

Chaplain Tom Warner serves in retirement centers with Ministry To The Aged and also at the Idaho State Veterans Home in Boise and Meridian, Idaho.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE INCREASE

It has been some time since the last increase in the "Witness" subscription rate, and, in the meantime, printing and postage costs have risen dramatically. Understanding that many of our readers are on limited (or fixed) incomes, it is not our desire to make it more difficult to afford a subscription to the "Witness." But something must be done to offset (or, at least, partially offset) our increased costs; so, effective January 1, 2007, in accordance with a recommendation from the ACGC Finance Committee, we are raising the rate to $16 per year for individual subscriptions and $12 per year per address for group (Fellowship Plan) subscriptions. Even if your subscription doesn't expire at the end of 2006, you can "stave off" this rate increase by renewing your subscription NOW, at the old rate of $15 per year for individual subscriptions and $11.50 per year per address for group (Fellowship Plan) subscriptions. THANK YOU for your continued support of Advent Christian worldwide ministry through your subscription to the "Witness!"✞

Who Am I?

Write the name of the leader for each sentence from the list below. Then write the boxed letters in order to find a secret message.

1. He led the Israelites into the Promised Land. □ _ _ _ _ _
2. Jesus said, "And on this rock, I will build my church" Matt. 16:18. Who was he talking about? _ □ _ _ _
3. He was a good king and was committed to the Lord until his last years. _ □ _
4. He was the first king of Israel. _ _ □ _
5. She was a queen who risked her life to save her people. _ □ _ _ _ _
6. He was a man after God's own heart. _ _ _ □ _
7. He was the wisest king. □ _ _ _ _ _ _
8. He was a son of Abraham, sent away, but made into a great nation. _ _ _ _ _ _ □
9. He was sold into slavery but became a great ruler in Egypt. _ □ _ _ _ _
10. He was the father of many nations. _ _ □ _ _ _ _
11. He was an evil king who wanted to kill Jesus. _ _ _ _ □

Secret Message: □□□□□ □□ □□□□

List: Abraham, Asa, David, Esther, Herod, Ishmael, Joseph, Joshua, Peter, Saul, Solomon

Sudoku Puzzle

The numbers 1-9 should be used once in each row, each column, and each square.

Puzzle solution is on next page

				2		6	1	5
5	3	6		9				
2				7	5	3	4	
		3	9				5	2
	2	9	5	8	6			
	5	8				9	6	7
			4		9	7		6
8	6					1	9	4
4	9	7	8		1			



As Children

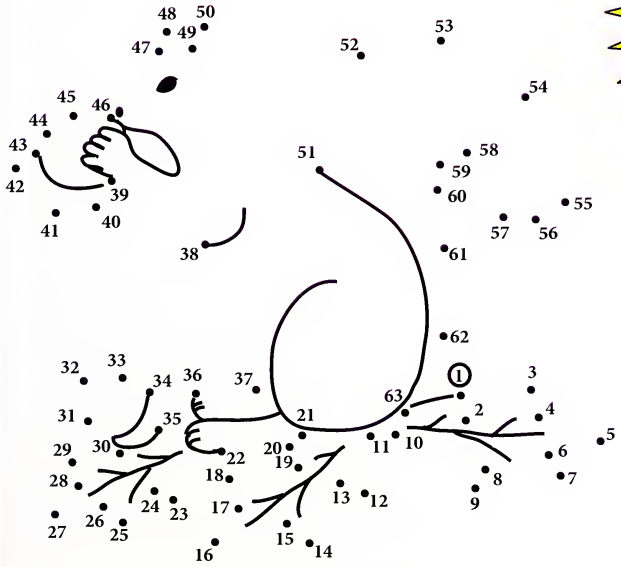
"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

UNSCRAMBLE THESE BIBLE VERSES (NIV)

1. leads quiet He waters. me beside — Psalm 23:2
2. leads Lord The fear of life. the to — Proverbs 19:23
3. follow they know His sheep because his voice. him know — John 10:4
4. lead In your you love have redeemed. unfailing will the you people have — Exodus 15:13
5. lead astray. do not let Dear children you anyone — I John 3:7

DOT TO DOT



How many words can you make out of the letters in LEADERSHIP?

Sudoku Puzzle Solution

4	9	7	8	6	1	5	2	3
8	6	5	7	3	2	1	9	4
3	1	2	4	5	9	7	8	6
1	5	8	2	4	3	9	6	7
7	2	9	5	8	6	4	3	1
6	4	3	9	1	7	8	5	2
2	8	1	6	7	5	3	4	9
5	3	6	1	9	4	2	7	8
9	7	4	3	2	8	6	1	5

Teachings On The Mount



By ADAM KING

BLOWING ROCK, N.C. — American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" could almost explain how counselors at Advent Christian camps up and down the East Coast hide their truths.

Dunbar's piece falls short in that it only captures the persona of a race, not an entire faith. The June 2006 training week at the Appalachian Advent Christian Campground taught counselors how to unmask themselves for leadership through studying John Lynch's book, "TrueFaced," and learning from camp directors.

"It really isn't about anything I can possibly do myself, but it's all about God," Camp Dixie counselor Lauren Brooks said.

Understanding grace was big. Daily activities at the mountain getaway included the routine 8 a.m. wake up, breakfast and off to groups to walk through camp schedules and such.

However, counselors' time with God seemed to produce the real learning. Mid-morning quiet times involved service-geared scripture and time to think. DVD clips of Lynch sharing how we should trust God before pleasing him was thought fuel. Lynch's material in "TrueFaced" reminded counselors that constantly rebuilding themselves is "toxic thinking" as grace is available.

Remembering that Christ is in you, and not the other way around, was a key building block. "It's not about starting over, it's about going deeper," said Camp Dixie counselor Ricky Watts. "To be a leader you need to be humble."

A powerful Wednesday-night worship service included testimony, confession and simple heartfelt sharing. "Learning to view others as saints and unmask self opened a door to realness," said Camp Suwannee counselor Jamie Tasker. When counselors unmasked themselves to expose their problems and true conditions, instead of wearing the falsehoods that come with performing works, the trust factor brightened.

Accepting grace was the final — perhaps most important — checkpoint before entering leadership roles. The honest unmasking was step one.

"You have to be who you are," General Appalachian counselor Brad Bailey said. "You can't try to be someone you're not."



Leading campers in spiritual growth and maybe even to inviting Christ into their lives works better when the leader understands the ultimate love. "We're all messed-up people, but God takes over our weaknesses, makes us strong and makes us the leaders that we are," said Appalachian Regional Youth Ministries Director Chris Phillips.





Role modeling to campers is, itself, an experience. "A dilemma exists in meeting souls where they are if counselors fail to realize grace for themselves," said Phillips.



Acknowledging our position and removing the "everything's great" mask makes a difference. Living in "The Room of Good Intentions" (as Lynch put it) can never support us like "The Room of Grace."

"Good intentions are just good intentions, and you really have to realize you're nothing without trusting God," said Camp Suwannee counselor Blythe Bingham. Worship and discussion groups allowed counselors to gain that knowledge as a pleasing supplement to team-building activities and the famous DISC Personality Test.

Between late-night lettuce attacks, Parkway buffets and camp-on-camp verbal assaults at open mic night (all in fun), counselors found their leadership lessons.

God's grace — more beautiful than the Blue Ridge Mountains that surrounded counselor training '06 — is limitless if we simply receive it. "Whether young or old, God's love is the same, and this is especially easy to see when we trash our masks," said Brooks. ✝





LET US!

By Pam Buchanan

We have all felt its **power** …

We have all been the recipient of its **hope** …
We have all gained from its imparted
affirmation …

And that is **"encouragement."**

The dictionary definition uses words like "to inspire, to stimulate, to console, to hearten, to cheer, to help and to give courage." The Greek would lean towards the idea of "coming alongside."

We read about it in Hebrews 10:24-26 …
*"And **let us** consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **Let us** not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **let us** encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

As we consider these few verses in light of becoming an "encourager," we observe several things:

#1 – the fact that it is a command, not a choice,

#2 – it is intended for the involvement of all rather than a gifted few, and

#3 – there is a real need for more (not less) active encouragers as the Day of our Lord's return draws nearer.

Each year, our WHFMS National Board oversees the writing of a Program Kit to be used in our monthly meetings. One particular program, included in last year's kit, addresses the subject of being an "encourager" and was written by Lois Mikeal of First Advent Christian Church in Lenoir, N.C. She tells of her

80-year-old mother who was befriended by a young girl in her 20s named Allison. Lois describes this relationship in her own words …

> "Allison would stop by Mom's house frequently to sit and talk for hours. I know that those visits had a profound impact on my mother, because there would be such a positive change in her attitude and her health following an "Allison" visit. Allison showed a genuine interest in my mom, and she helped her to think less about her frailties and to think more positively about others. Because of Allison's encouragement, Mom was able to reach out to others in encouraging ways. Allison was a giver, not a taker. There were probably 101 other things that Allison could have done with her time, but she chose to give to my Mom. She knew that Mom got extremely lonely during the long days and that the best gift she could give was a gift of her personal presence and of her time."

Allison is a good example to us of one who took the "let us" commands in Hebrews very seriously. The command is for all of us to be involved in encouraging one another.

When I think of those who need our encouragement, my mind returns to the day I gave birth to our first child. In the hospital, I shared a room with another mother. We had both given birth to sons the same day in the same town and in the same hospital, but that was where the similarities ended. As we talked, I learned that:

she was in her teens …
I was almost 30,

she was unwed …
I had been married for five wonderful years,

the father of her child was not interested …
my husband had never left my side,

her side of the room was empty …
mine was full of flowers, gifts and church members,

her only support as she left the hospital was an elderly grandmother …
I was going home to a clean, decorated home complete with husband, parents, plenty of babysitters and home-cooked meals that would never end.

That has been almost 20 years ago, and I often wonder what happened to that young girl. What would her son be doing today? Did anyone "come along side her" as a source of encouragement? She is just one example of many that we need to be reaching out to and offering our words and deeds of hope found only in Christ.

All of us have someone in our lives who needs to be encouraged, and all of us have the ability to be a blessing.

Encourage someone

- Visits
  - to nursing homes
  - to hospitals
  - to prisoners
- Cards
- Phone calls
- Gifts
- Smiles
- Prepare a meal
  - for a neighbor
  - for a shut-in
  - for a college student
- Pray
- Preparing treats to say "thank you"
  - for teachers
  - for firemen
  - for police
  - for military
- Babysit — for free
- Transportation
  - to doctors
  - to airport
- Etc.

The list is endless, as are the needs. So …

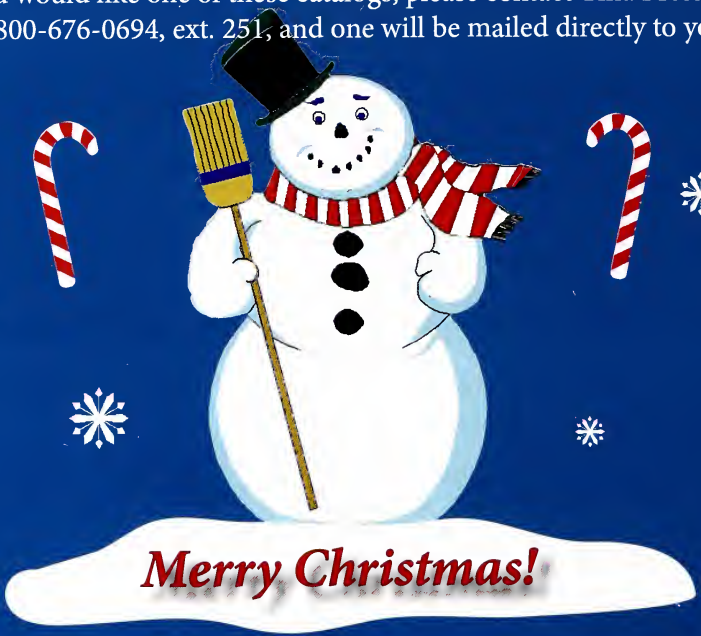
Let Us!+

Coming soon!

Yes, it is that time of year again! Watch your mailboxes! ***Venture Bookstore*** will be sending out a packet of our best-selling Christmas catalogs! Inside of these catalogs you will find a wide variety of music, programs and skits for all ages and combinations of participants. We are also going to include a few catalogs with exciting new materials available through ***Venture Bookstore.***

Remember to order early!

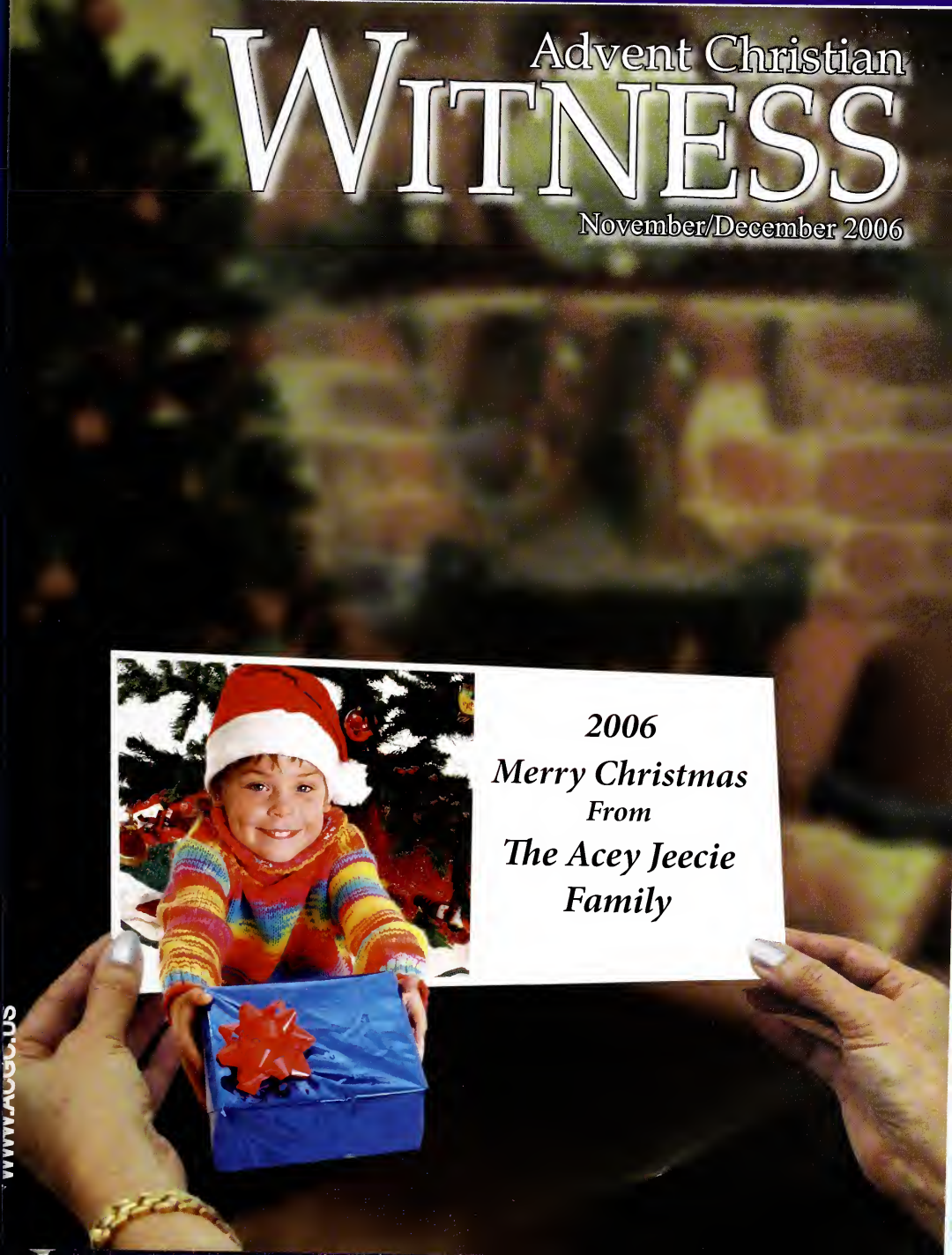
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From the Editor



I hope this doesn't sound boastful; but I've discovered a solution to all the financial challenges of the Advent Christian denomination: it's called tithing.

Before you flip to the next page, please hear me out. I'm ***not*** saying Christians are bound by Old Testament Law. But I do believe "the promises of God through his prophets are for you" (Acts 3:25, TEV); so there must be a way we can access the promise of Malachi 3:10 — where God said, "Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple ... and ... I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things."

That promise raises some questions: What is "the full amount" of our tithes? Where is "the Temple"? What "kinds of good things" might God pour out on us if we meet his conditions?

The first question is easy to answer. The Hebrew word translated "tithe" means one-tenth. It doesn't mean "some" or "a little" or "whatever I can afford." Neither does it mean "a lot" or "everything I have." It simply means one-tenth.

What is one-tenth of the yearly income of the Advent Christian people in the United States? Let's assume Advent Christians have average American incomes. The average American makes $40,100 a year, according to the 2006 World Almanac (pg.846). There are

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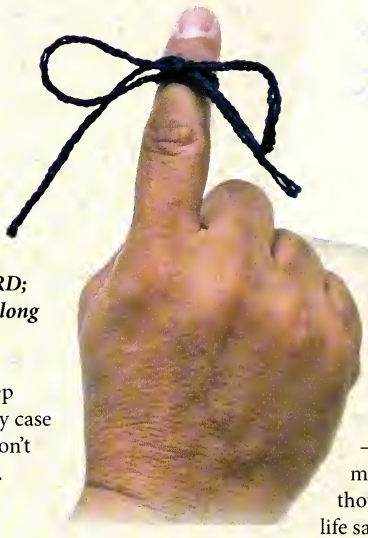
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Remember

By Clayton Blackstone



"***I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago***" (Psalm 77:11).

Over the years, people have had to keep reminding me to remember. Some may case their admonition in the negative — "don't forget" — but it means the same thing.

My Dad told me to remember to drive safely. My Mom said, "Don't forget to write when you get the chance." My teachers admonished me to remember my assignments. The Ministerial Committee, to whom I am responsible, reminds me to remember that my annual report must be filed by January 31. My wife — well, she's given up. She lost hope when I couldn't remember to take my Ginkgo Biloba and resigned herself to spending the balance of our married life helping me look for my glasses or my keys or the checkbook.

Remember. Don't forget.

This month, we remember a significant day in our nation's history — November 22, 1963. You might remember where you were and what you were doing at the time you learned that Lee Harvey Oswald had assassinated President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. I can't remember what I ate for lunch yesterday, but I can see myself sitting in the seventh and eighth grade room at Perham Elementary School 43 years ago. Mr. Harper threw out the lesson plans and brought the television into the room, and we watched history in the making.

If you are old enough, you may remember Black Friday — October 29, 1929. The stock market "crashed" that day and thousands of people lost their life savings. The lifetime spending habits of my parents' generation were shaped by that dark day in U.S. economic history.

Or maybe you remember December 7, 1941. Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke of it as "a day that will live in infamy." Japanese airplanes dove from the Hawaiian sky on a leisurely Sunday morning and caught a significant portion of the American fleet napping. A reluctant nation was forced to fight a war in two theatres.

If you are a contemporary music fan, you remember August 12, 1980. That's the night Mark David Chapman pumped four bullets from a .38 handgun into the back and shoulders of John Lennon, perhaps the most influential member of the musical group from Great Britain that turned the music world upside down in the 1960s. Thousands gathered in Central Park for a candlelight vigil as news of his death spread.

For those sadistic souls among us for whom suffering and disappointment are the stuff of which life is made, October 25, 1986, has been burned into

our minds with the permanent blackness left by the wood-burning tools we fiddled with in childhood. That's the day the Red Sox nation believed the curse of the Bambino was finally going to be laid to rest. The game was all but won when Mookie Wilson's softly hit ball rolled under the glove of the first baseman, Bill Buckner, into short right field. Ray Knight rounded third to score, and the Mets dashed our hopes of a World Series win again.

And who can forget September 11, 2001? I was at the office when a parishioner called with the news. It wasn't long before I abandoned any hope of accomplishing the list of things in my Franklin Planner and went home to watch the news coverage that continued uninterrupted thoughout the day. We stared in disbelief as the news organizations played and replayed footage of hijacked airliners slamming into the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Life changed for us in those moments.

Significant events in world history are not the only things I remember. I remember traumatic incidents that have shaped my responses in adulthood. I remember times I felt slighted by my friends. I recall words that wounded my spirit as if they were spoken yesterday. But remembering the deeds of the Lord — that's easier said than done.

A few years ago, our congregation spent time during the hours leading up to worship, remembering. Together we attempted to **"remember the deeds of the LORD; to remember his miracles of long ago."** I hope that it was easier for my folks than it was for me. I know the biblical texts well enough.

"My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon — from Mount Mizar."

"In the night I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law."

"May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy."

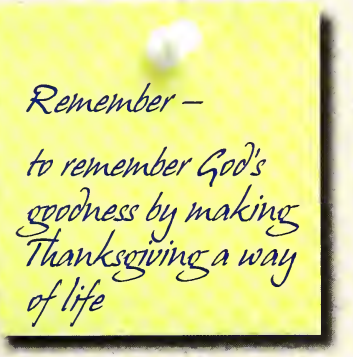
"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me."

"Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day."

"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Even in the face of significant biblical admonition, I strain to remember the goodness of the Lord. Perhaps because I take his goodness for granted. Perhaps because God seldom blesses me according to my prescriptions. Perhaps because I am almost never satisfied. Perhaps because my short-term memory is failing. Probably all the above and because I share common genes with people of faith from every generation: we forget more than we remember about the goodness of God.

In the aftermath of that day, God reminded me to remember to remember his goodness by making Thanksgiving a way of life rather than one day in 365. He also hinted that I had better write it down in the fashion of the ancient psalmists, because, like the children of Israel, I tend to forget.✞



The Christmas Story



By John C. Barrenger, Jr.

Mary was weaving cloth on the roof of her home in Nazareth when a man came up the outside stairs.

"Hail favored one; the Lord is with you today! Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will conceive a child, a son, and he will be called 'the Son of the Most High' and will be great. The Lord will give him the throne of David, his father. His kingdom will never end, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever."



"How can this happen? I am still a virgin and am only engaged to be married."

"I am Gabriel and a messenger of God. He will send his Holy Spirit to come upon you, and his power will overshadow you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God, and you will call him Jesus. You do not believe me! Know that your cousin Elizabeth is pregnant and in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God!"

"I am the bondslave of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you have said to me." The angel left her.

Soon Mary and her family did receive word that Elizabeth was pregnant. Everyone was surprised. Elizabeth and her husband, Zacharias, had never been blessed with children. Mary wanted to share her news with Elizabeth and asked her uncle if she could go. The trip seemed to take longer than planned, but she was soon entering the house of Elizabeth and Zacharias.

"Elizabeth, it's me, Mary!" Elizabeth jumped up with joy at the sound of Mary's voice.

"You are blessed among all the women of the world. And blessed is the child in your womb. Why did the mother of my Lord come to visit me? And, when I heard you speak, my baby jumped with joy, too. You are blessed, also, because you believed these things would happen just as the Lord told you."

Mary replied with a song that came from her heart and soul.

"My soul praises the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

He has thought about his bondslave and the humbleness of her state.

Generations from this time onward will count me blessed.

Holy is his name for he has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

His mercy will be for those who fear him and for generation after generation.

He has done mighty deeds with his strong arms.

He has broken those who were proud in their thoughts and hearts.

He has brought down rulers who exalted themselves.

But he has fed the hungry and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has given help to his servant Israel, in memory of his mercy

To Abraham and his children forever, as he said to our fathers."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for another three months and was there for her delivery. John would turn many of the sons of Israel back to God. He would bring to many the forgiveness of the Lord.

After returning to Nazareth, Mary went to Joseph and told him she was pregnant and that God was the father of the child. Joseph did not believe her.

"How could you bring such shame to me and your family? I cannot go through with our marriage with this shame. But I will break off our engagement quietly. I will make the arrangements." He left for his house and slept.

"Joseph, Joseph!" A voice called his name waking him. A man was standing beside him.



"I am Gabriel. The Lord, your God, has sent me to speak to you. Do not be afraid to take Mary for your wife even though she is pregnant. The baby is of the Holy Spirit of God. She will bear a son and he will save his people from their sins. His name shall be Immanuel, which means "God with us." Nothing is impossible with God. Do not be afraid to marry her!" He left Joseph. In the morning Joseph went to Mary and married her.

During the year 7 BC, Caesar Augustus decided his empire needed to be counted. The census was done in Israel in 5 BC. Every man and his family were required to go to his family's hometown. Joseph was a descendant of Israel's great king David and had to go to Bethlehem, and Mary went with him. All the inns were full when they arrived, but they were lucky to find a spot in a stable. It was here that she gave birth to her son.

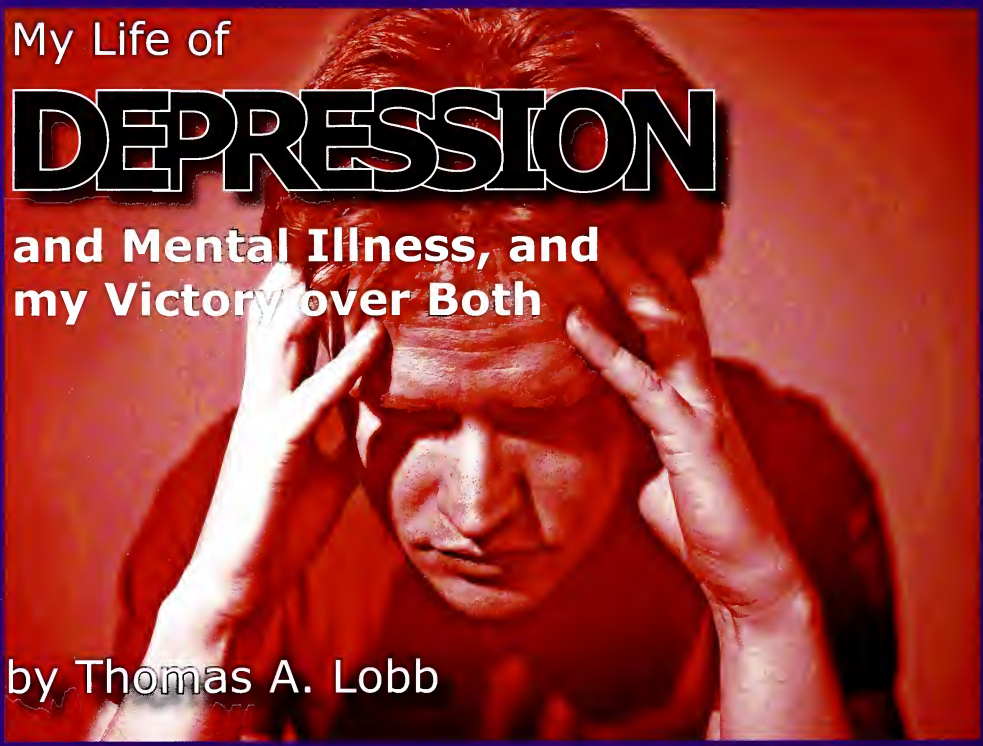
In the nearby hills shepherds were watching their sheep. Suddenly they were surrounded by a light brighter than the sun. A man stepped out of the light.



"Do not be afraid of me. I am an angel of the Lord, and I bring you good news of great joy; a joy that will be for all people. Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born for you and is Christ the Lord. You will know him, because he will be wrapped in a blanket sleeping in a stable. This is according to the prophet Isaiah."

There suddenly appeared a great multitude of angels, and they sang a song praising God, "Glory to God in the highest and, on earth, peace and good will to all people!"

(continued on page 13)



My Life of DEPRESSION and Mental Illness, and my Victory over Both

by Thomas A. Lobb

Major depression is hell. More precisely, it is a living hell on earth. It is virtually impossible to make rational decisions when depressed. Strange and evil fantasies have entered my mind during major depression, putting my life in jeopardy many times. Up until eight years ago, I had lived with depression all of my life. A number of times during the first 48 years of my life, I suffered from major depression, and for two years I experienced emotional illness (more commonly known as mental illness). Because of my recovery from depression — and it has taken nearly eight years for me to fully recover — I am able and willing to share my experiences. If just one person is helped by this article, it will have been worth the effort in writing it. I am telling my story so that others with depression can relate to it, realize that they are not alone and understand that there is hope for whatever depression and emotional illness they are experiencing.

I never felt that my depression was caused by some particular sin in my life. I have experienced spiritual warfare almost always accompanying depression, but it did not cause, nor was it caused by, the depression. However, it has always exacerbated my depression. I am currently taking an antidepressant. I am a firm believer in taking whatever medication is necessary to minimize or eliminate the effects of depression and anxiety, which has often accompanied my depression. I

have taken Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Wellbutrin and Effexor XR, and I am currently taking Lexapro for clinical depression. I have also taken Buspar to minimize anxiety and Trazodone to induce sleep. I take my prescribed medications as religiously as my grandmother used to take her medicine for high blood pressure. These medications and scores of hours of professional counseling are responsible for my good emotional health today. To maintain this health, I will have to take antidepressants for the rest of my life, and I will visit my psychologist twice a year.

I never thought of myself as being unhappy while I was growing up, and I remember being generally happy while I was in college and during my young adulthood. But looking back to my childhood and teen years, I now realize that there were times when I was depressed and angry. And I struggled with excessive shyness, which I now blame on depression, up to and through my college years. When I was in my early 20s, a Christian woman gave me a copy of Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking." She could apparently see depression and unhappiness in me. I had very little positive self-esteem in those days. I still struggle with it.

I was shocked at how much fun they were having. I could not remember having had such fun when I was their age.

At age 40, while working with teenagers in our church's youth group, many emotions inside me erupted. I was shocked at how much fun they were having. I could not remember having had such fun when I was their age. I was very upset over missing out on so much of life when I was 25 years younger. This began a two-year period of emotional illness for me. My psychologist revealed to me the ugly truth: I had basically quit growing up emotionally in some ways when I was about 15. Depression had begun to stunt me at that age, and it continued for the next 25 years.

With depression came many losses in my life. There were many years of worry and struggle. There were innumerable days when I could just barely do my job in the workplace; things just overwhelmed me at work. So many decisions in life I would have made differently if I had not been depressed in my 20s, 30s and 40s.

One of the biggest losses came when I chose not to have children in my 20s. For many years this decision puzzled me, especially because I enjoyed working with teenagers. But I am now convinced that a major contributor to my decision was my undiagnosed depression. Why would I want children if I were not fully satisfied with my own life? When I finally learned that undiagnosed depression had likely played a key role in this decision, it was too late. For several years after learning this, I felt that I had been robbed of the opportunity to have children when I was younger. Looking back, however, I believe that God spared me from having to raise children while I was emotionally ill.

For the two years when I was emotionally ill, I don't think it was possible for me to be happy. I remember one time asking my wife, Nelda, "What is wrong with me?" Her response was simply, "I don't know." It was difficult to feel good when I had no idea what was happening to me. Peace was possible, but I didn't experience much of that either. The closest I came to having peace was when I was in the presence of a professional psychologist spilling my heart out. I guess I felt safe in his presence and knew there was hope for me to be healed.

I occasionally kept a log of my feelings when I was significantly depressed. These are my words from one entry: "I am right now suffering from

depression. My anger has been at a higher level the past few weeks. I have snapped at Nelda and one friend, and this is not my typical behavior. Everything I encounter has a negative feeling associated with it. I feel somewhat like the pessimistic child who was terribly disappointed with his birthday presents. Even though the child had asked for these gifts, he saw only their negative characteristics: one present might break; he might get hurt using another present; and so on. This is exactly how I feel about everything."

My log continues, "When something negative happens, I jump to the worst possible conclusion. Even though I theoretically know how to convince myself that my conclusion is only one of several possibilities, I still choose the worst possible option. At work recently, when I made a mistake in one of my projects, I jumped to the conclusion that the project would either be taken away from me, or it would be cancelled. Under normal circumstances I would have fixed the mistake and moved on from there without worry."

I remember many times, after arriving at work in the morning, that I would look at my list of tasks for the day and get angry and overwhelmed at all I had to do. I would then typically break a pen. This went on for many months. It was dreadful going to work, and the dread began as soon as I woke up in the morning.

I have just described how I felt for eight years in my 40s before receiving medications and appropriate counseling. I feel that much of the joy of life and the ability to achieve were taken away from me during those years. I must admit that during much of this time I was in a state of denial. Although no one suggested to me that I was depressed, I thought that I might be. Several times I remember thinking about the implications of being depressed. It might mean that I would have to take medications, perhaps for the rest of my life, and I did not want to be "chemically dependent."

In February 1997, a psychiatrist concluded that I suffered from clinical depression and the anxiety that often accompanies it. I learned that clinical depression tends to run in families. My paternal grandmother experienced clinical depression all during the last half of her life. She was frequently given shock treatments for more than 30 years (there were no antidepressants in those days). Depression ruled her life, and she spent much of her life in bed. She could not handle change, and she could not perform simple, everyday tasks without difficulty. In a sense, I inherited depression (or at least a strong tendency to be depressed) from her.

Three weeks after I started my medications, my depression began to diminish. It was not long before I quit breaking pens after looking at my "to do" list at work. The list no longer angered me. Instead of putting my head on my desk at lunchtime and sleeping (as I had done for more than three years), I was now walking two miles during my lunch break. I experienced a major change both in my emotional outlook and in my level of physical energy. I was especially surprised at all the new energy I had.

I wanted to share my story of victory over depression ... I was happy just to be alive and to share life with others.

For the first time in my life, I began to go out of my way to build friendships. I wanted to share my story of victory over depression with people. More importantly, I was happy just to be alive and to share life with others. Since then my friendships with men have grown closer, and I have built healthy friendships with women in the workplace (one woman is now a close Christian

friend). I am no longer at risk for having an affair, although I am very cautious in this area.

My psychologist has described my emotional condition in this way: I have always had a low level of depression, with occasional flare-ups into major depression. This has often been accompanied by a significant amount of anxiety and with a "low to moderate" level of obsessive-compulsive disorder. These afflictions will always be a part of my life, but medication and counseling will significantly minimize them to the point where I can be happy and live a productive life.

The medications are not just responsible for me feeling good; they are the keys to my ability to achieve. I am sure that I would not be pursuing a master's degree if I were not taking an antidepressant. I am also just as certain that I would be planning to retire soon without this medication, since my energy level would be low without it. As it is, I have no immediate plans to retire.

People with depression suffer from a great loss, and so they must grieve. ... grieving has often required anger — even anger at God.

However, getting the right medications in the right doses is not a simple matter. It initially took 18 months to get my medications properly adjusted. In addition, after taking a medication for a long time (one to seven years), it will become less effective in controlling depression or anxiety. I recently ended a six-month period of experimentation with new medications because two of my medications had become less effective. It was a time of emotional uncertainty. I had to remind myself numerous times that any feelings of depression (and the associated physical side effects) were a result of changing medications.

Today my emotional health is good. Although I do not consider myself frail, I do need to be careful not to push myself too hard. Everyone has limits, and I know where my limits are. When my outlook on life seems a bit gloomy, I notice my level of anger rising, and when I begin experiencing unhappiness and negative thinking, I know that I must reduce the stress in my life. This includes reducing or eliminating activities that I know create stress for me. I always watch for signs of depression, because I cannot afford to get depressed, since I am already taking near the maximum level of antidepressant.

It has taken a long time for me to heal. Living with depression for 48 years has taken its toll on my life. People with depression suffer from a great loss, and so they must grieve. For me, grieving has often required anger — even anger at God. During my time of healing, it was good to have a Christian friend, who also was in therapy and taking antidepressants, with whom to share. It was good to vent our feelings when we talked. Comparing medications and their effects was also an important thing for both of us.

I now look back at those two years of emotional illness and wonder just exactly what it was that I went through. I was often bewildered and felt that I had no direction in life and no place to put my troubled feelings. I had absolutely no idea what was causing my negative emotions. For a long time it didn't occur to me that that terrible stage of my life would eventually end. I look back at my first three years of intensive counseling as a rare opportunity to work through a number of teenage problems. I now consider myself quite fortunate. After all, how many people have the opportunity to resolve problems that came up years earlier?

I mentioned earlier that I never felt that my depression was due to any particular sin in my life, but depression (at least for me) has had a number of spiritual implications. There were many times when I thought I was being attacked directly by Satan. I would sometimes get so furious I would curse Satan for the situation I was in. I was in fear much of the time. Many nights I would wake up and be absolutely terrified that I wouldn't be able to go back to sleep. I was so angry with God at times that I would jump up and down on my Bible.

Depression and spiritual warfare are an extremely painful combination. Many times I never knew whether what I was experiencing was a genuine fear, something only imagined, depression or spiritual warfare. Perhaps it was a combination of all four things, but the net result was that I often lived in a very troubled and confused world, unable to make decisions based on genuine facts. I lived in this emotional state for decades.

Life is a very precious gift. Jesus came into our lives so that we could have life and live it abundantly.

I never expected God to grant me an instantaneous miracle and heal me of depression. Others suggested that such a miracle was possible. I am sure that the reality was that only medications and counseling could help me. These have been the God-given miracles in my life. My grandmother was never granted an outright miracle for her high blood pressure, and she took medication for the last years of her life. Why should I have an easier path than she did? Prayer has certainly helped, but it has not been enough to resolve major depression.

A very great part of who I am today has been shaped by my struggle with depression, but I now accept this. I know that it has prepared me for what lies ahead. It prepared me for the strong psychological impact that the events of September 11, 2001, have had on this country. It has given me the courage to get a master's degree 33 years after getting my undergraduate degree in an entirely different field. I am much stronger as a result of dealing with this terrible disease.

I have shared with you my story of depression and emotional illness for a reason. If you are struggling with either of these related diseases (or if you know of someone who is), please do something about it as soon as possible. Life is a very precious gift. Jesus came into our lives so that we could have life and live it abundantly. Eliminating depression and its counterpart (emotional illness) is a necessary first step in living life to the full. I've been there; I know. At age 56, I can say that I am glad that I became aware of my depression and had the courage to do something about it. None of this has been easy, and it has been a long road to complete health, but it has certainly been worthwhile.

Please do yourself, your friends and loved ones a favor. Consider the possibility that depression may be affecting your life, and seek out help. It's what God wants for you. I am certain of that. ✝

Tom Lobb is a chemical engineer working for the Boeing Company. He and his wife Nelda live in Kent, Washington, are active in the West Valley AC Church and contribute to an outreach worship service held in a local nursing home.

(continued from page 7)

"We must see this great thing!" they said, and they went quickly to Bethlehem and found the baby in the stable as the angel had said. They returned to their sheep praising God for his goodness.

On the eighth day after his birth, Joseph and Mary took the baby to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses. While at the Temple, a man named Simeon, a devout and righteous man, came before them. God had told him he would not die without seeing the Savior of mankind. Holding Jesus, he said, "Now, Lord, let your servant die in peace, for I have seen your salvation. You have prepared this for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Here is the glory of your people Israel and the light of revelation to the Gentiles." He returned Jesus to Mary and spoke to her. "Blessed are you both. Behold, this Child will be the rise and fall of many people in Israel. And you, Mother, a sword will pierce your own soul, for he will reveal the thoughts of many hearts."

Also in the temple there was a prophetess named Anna, who had not left the temple since her husband had died, but served God always by fasting and praying. She gave thanks to God and spoke of Jesus to all the people looking for the redemption of Jerusalem and Israel.

Joseph and Mary were amazed by what Anna and Simeon had said. They returned to Bethlehem. When Jesus was a few months old, they had some more visitors. Wise men came from the east, following a star that was still in the sky. They had gone to Jerusalem first and met with King Herod. They were brought before him with great ceremony.



"Welcome to my court, Kings of the East!"

"We have journeyed here to worship him who has been born King of the Jews. His star appeared to us about two years ago and led us here to your kingdom. Do you know where we may find him?" Herod was very troubled by these words.

"Dine with me this evening while I get our priests and scribes to find out where he would be born."

Later he sent for the men from the east and spoke to them.

"Go and search for the child. I was told he would be born in Bethlehem. When you have found him, come and tell me so I can worship him, too."

The wise men left Jerusalem, and they saw that the star had stopped over Bethlehem. They found the house where Jesus and his mother and father were staying. They entered the house, saw the child and fell to their knees to worship him. They gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In a dream that night they each were warned by God not to return to Jerusalem, because Herod was planning to kill the child. Before daylight they were heading home by a different road.

Joseph had a dream that same night, and another angel spoke to him.

"Run! Herod wants to kill the child! Go to Egypt and stay there until God calls you back. This will save his life and fulfill the prophecy that says God will call his son out of Egypt." He awoke and took the child and his mother and left immediately.

When Herod had heard that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became very angry. He sent his soldiers to kill all male children less than two years of age in Bethlehem. He believed he could kill the child because of what the wise men had told him. There was great sorrow in Ramah because of this act, as predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. After Herod had died another angel came to Joseph and said he could return to Israel. When Joseph heard that Herod's son was now king, he was afraid he would want to kill the child, too. Instead of returning to Bethlehem, Joseph took them to Nazareth to live. There, Jesus grew intelligent, strong and wise and was filled with the grace of God and the respect of men.

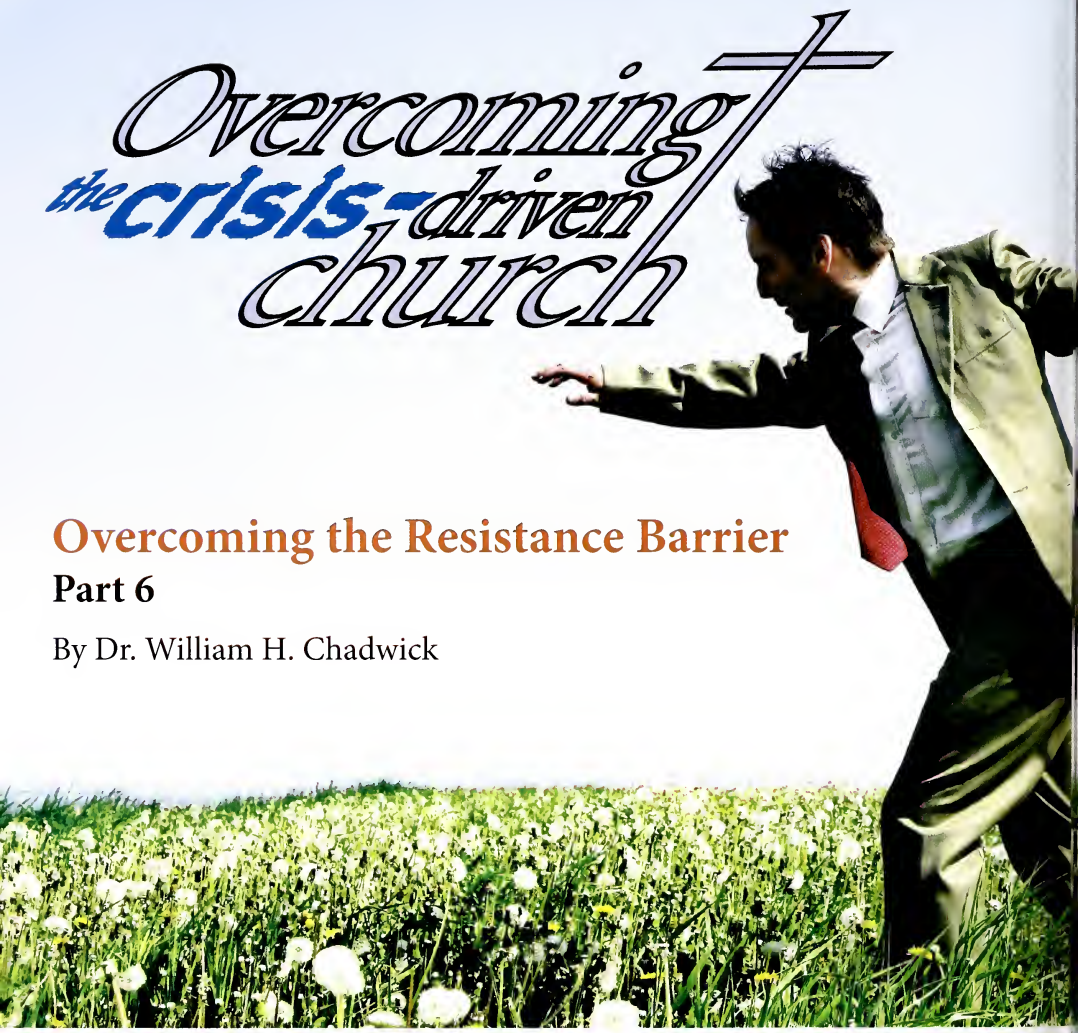
Mary treasured all these events in her heart.

Christmas had come to the world.✞



John Barrenger, Jr. is a school teacher in DeKalb, Ill., and attends the DeKalb AC Church.

Overcoming the crisis-driven church



Overcoming the Resistance Barrier

Part 6

By Dr. William H. Chadwick

We have had three new pastors in six years. Every one of them had some new way that we needed to spend our money. If we had followed them we would have used up all of our cash reserves. Who knows where we would be today! We were lucky to get rid of them.

It is easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle than to get a church to try something new.
- The Book of Hesitations 3:16

One of the most daunting tasks for any ministry leader, who is functioning within the confines of a small established church, is the task of breaking through the *resistance barrier*. This barrier is often comprised of three obstructive components that need to be addressed, if any new initiatives are ever to be launched.



Overcoming Fear

The first component that creates the resistance barrier is *fear*. Small established churches (SECs) have mastered the art of survival. They fear death, the closure of their church or anything that would reduce the stature they now enjoy. In many cases they have less of a desire to grow than they have for just keeping the facility open for one more year. Overcoming their fear of death requires skill, grace and a commitment to lead through adversity. So how can pastors help SECs to overcome fear?

Baby Steps

In the hilarious comedy movie, "What About Bob," Bill Murray plays the part of a pesky counseling client who develops a massive dependency on his psychiatrist (played by Richard Dreyfus). Murray eventually finds

healing in principles promoted in Dreyfus' book, "Baby Steps." The basic premise of the book is simple: you build confidence by achieving attainable successes. This creates the boldness you will need for taking on more significant challenges.

Bringing renewal to an SEC requires a gradual building of the church's confidence. The most productive way to achieve this goal is to take baby steps. Baby steps, however, are not the same as going slowly. In reality, children learning to walk often go from crawling to wildly charging across the room in just weeks. ***The speed of change has less regulatory value than the careful encouragement of moving from one successful transition to another more challenging step.***

Baby Steps in Leadership

It is a mistake to assume that by virtue of your position you have been granted the authority to lead. Leadership ***authority is an earned commodity***. As the leader of a church, you can correctly assume that you will have to "earn the right to be heard."

Earning that right is often surprisingly easy. It has been my experience that the Lord anoints his leaders, and they quickly bring "value added" to the ministries they serve. Capitalizing on your successes in leadership and translating these successes into leadership creditability is the real challenge. This requires thought and an accurate record of performance history (a "***success portfolio***"). Remember, churches are afraid of dying, so acknowledging your successes as a good leader is a confidence-building step in gaining their trust.

Creating a ***success portfolio*** involves understanding that people assess your performance on a credit and debit standard. Imagine having a bank account into which you deposit positive things that you have done for the church or the congregation. Whenever you have a challenging event confront your leadership, that places a withdrawal on your account. The secret to gaining the right to be heard is to live within a three-to-one ratio of credit to debit. This may sound unreasonable or even cynical, but every pastor reading this article will know that people do keep performance lists, and you can never have too many credits in your account.

Recording your successes is the very principle that David used to gain the confidence of Saul when he said, "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them" (1 Samuel 17:36). Legitimate successes can be discovered in every aspect of pastoral ministry. Understanding that people fixate on failures, our job is to establish a legacy of success.

There are practical measures that you can take to build your success portfolio. No pastoral report should be devoid of sharing the powerful victories that the ministry has experienced through your leadership. Showcase success, and be gracious in celebrating the achievements of others. Honor them in your worship service, at board meetings and in public settings, because cultivating a ***culture of success*** capitalizes on the baby steps that will grant you the right to be heard.

Humility is the act of knowing your value and voluntarily submitting your life to the Lord and your neighbor.

Your success portfolio has one purpose. It is not to be used by you for personal self-aggrandizement or gain. It is to ***provide stability and courage*** to the church to help it achieve goals that it fears are unattainable.

Some would argue that a success portfolio does not sound very Christian. It does not seem humble. A strong biblical case can be made for Christ's use of the underlying principle of earning trust. He healed; he taught; he walked on the water. All of these acts provided confidence to those who followed him. It can be argued that he created a success portfolio, and that he used these proofs to leverage belief.

Humility is the act of knowing your value and voluntarily submitting your life to the Lord and your neighbor. This is the Christ model found in the *kenosis* passage in Philippians 2:8b, "He humbled himself and became obedient … even to death on a cross." ***Humility was found in his service, not in self-abasement.***

Baby Steps in Building Confidence

Creating a platform of small successes instills a new confidence level in the church. Because of the importance of this process, wisdom dictates that you should pick your first growth initiatives wisely. There are three factors that should never be compromised when selecting your first program or project. First, it must be

attainable. Second, it must be attainable. Third, it ***must be attainable***.

Overwhelming a church with new ideas, concepts and direction is a common mistake for pastors who are eager to generate new life in SECs. Attempting to transform an SEC by changing multiple items simultaneously can make the transition toward growth seem to the church to be unattainable. Such an approach can actually bury an SEC's growth potential.

"There once was a young new pastor who took a call to a very rural church. On the first Sunday he was to preach, only one old farmer showed up. Sadly, the pastor said to the farmer, "Well, I guess we won't have a service today." To that the farmer replied, "You know, when I go out to the pasture with my wagon to feed the cows grain, and only one cow shows up, I feed her." With that encouragement, the pastor decided to begin the service to "feed" his new friend. In his exuberance, he launched into a two-and-a-half-hour sermon that covered every point related to his topic from Genesis to Revelation. After the benediction, he raced to the back of the church to greet the farmer. "What did you think?" asked the young pastor eagerly. "Well, you know that cow I was telling you about? When I fed her the grain, I didn't make her eat the whole wagonful."

Success will be found in baby steps that are appropriate for your ministry setting.

There needs to be a logical and systematic progression in achieving attainable goals. Avoid falling victim to the latest fads in ministry. Grasping for high impact popularity programming can create an erratic series of fits and starts that may create more problems than solutions. Don't let your initial projects or programs become confidence destroyers. Success will be found in baby steps that are appropriate for your ministry setting. Unless you discover these steps, your influence and tenure will be minimal.

At my first church, our first confidence-building project involved a coat of paint on the church and parsonage. The fresh look attracted new interest in our church. Inspired by this success, we decided to put up a new sign. This led to discussions regarding the church name, logo designs and overall marketing concerns. Within a year, these discussions caused us to reevaluate our by-laws to see if they addressed membership methods that would encourage our church to grow. Naturally, we had to explore our philosophy of ministry, which set us on a course of program development that eventually caused our church of 13 to become a church of 200. Baby steps!

Overcoming the Commitment Move

The second component that creates the resistance barrier involves the process I call "*the Commitment Move.*" In rock climbing, the commitment move is that uncomfortable point during a climb when you are forced to make an advancement decision that could either lead to success or failure.

Typically, the commitment move occurs when you have reached an impasse. You cannot get to the top of the climb using the route you chose. Although you may be secure where you are hanging, you are stuck. There is only one option. You need to change your position on the rock face. You must discover a new hold that will reveal a path to the top. Once you have discovered it, you must advance to that spot. This move will not tolerate a half-hearted effort. In rock climbing, you often lunge for the fresh perch. You must "commit" to the move or else you will fail to generate the momentum to acquire the new position.

There is a powerful urge that needs to be overcome — the urge to stay where you are.

This is the point where the death grip emerges. Sometimes, climbers panic. They become overwhelmed with fear and essentially refuse to move. Now there are two choices: stay where you are or fall back down the rock face. The death grip can occur in churches when they are confronted with life-changing decisions. There is a powerful urge that needs to be overcome — the urge to stay where you are.

Within the first year of my present pastorate, we confronted a commitment move that set the tone of our ministry for the next two decades. A library filled with used books and an old sofa was located in a space that

was being considered for an infant room. This proposed room would have the service piped in, a one-way glass window and rocking chairs. Our goal was to provide young mothers with a secure and comfortable space to tend to their babies' needs.

Several members of the governing board did not want to change that space. Their discussions centered on the thought that the library books should be read by our young people. When it was pointed out that no books had been signed out of the library in over three years, the defense strategy shifted to our obligation to the people who donated the sofa and the books on the shelves.

Clearly outdated models of youth discipleship and ghost obligations were confronting the need for culturally sensitive changes that would promote growth. Predictably, the last "concern" struck at the ***essential element of faith*** that is required to make a commitment move. "Besides, pastor, you don't have any young mothers and babies in the church, so why bother to build this expensive room?"

Building a competent leadership team is one of the primary jobs of a good leader.

Status quo is safe; it is the death grip of the SEC; and it is passively halting. That night, I framed my response with great care, for I knew that if we did not make a choice for growth at this level, we would never entertain change at higher levels. "This is a commitment move," I explained. "You asked me to be your pastor because you wanted to grow. You stated in my candidating interviews that you desired to see more young families in the church. Growth sometimes requires planning for people who have not yet arrived, so that when they do show up they can experience the love in Christ that this church has to offer. This room is about our future."

After 17 years in this pastorate, that single decision still stands out as the most defining moment our leadership team has ever had. We built the room. Sadly, some board members left, but the young families did arrive. Today, as hundreds worship in our new facility, I attribute our success all the way back to that first commitment move. That decision chose the future over the past, insuring our chance to experience our full kingdom potential.

Overcoming the Lack of Consensus

The third component that I think defines the resistance barrier is ***leadership consensus***. Having a leadership team that owns a plan and is willing to execute it (not you!) is an important piece of developing a healthy ministry. Building a competent leadership team is one of the primary jobs of a good leader. SECs are afraid of dying, and holding on to old leadership structures is one way they believe they are protecting their existence. You must help them to overcome their fear of losing power, and you must begin by building a team you can work with.

Leadership selection

Not everybody was selected by Jesus to be one of the 12 disciples. After much prayer and time with each of the potential candidates, Jesus chose "those he wanted, and they came to him" (Mark 3:13, Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13).

In many SECs a serious leadership mistake is made that initially presents itself as a safeguard against the threat of autocratic leadership. Leadership teams are selected by search committees with little regard for the team's performance capabilities. Instead, seniority, financial contributions, nepotism or simply the willingness of the candidates are the dominate leadership selection factors in many small churches. Rarely will these selection criteria produce an effective leadership team that a pastor can develop.

Bill Hybels, the nationally recognized pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, states that there are three qualities he looks for in potential leaders: ***Character, Commitment, and Chemistry.***

Charac is an easy quality to assume that people have, yet a painful quality to discover that they have missing. Character is defined as the ***foundational elements*** that are employed in a person's decision-making and living choices. As Christians, our primary concern is a person's conformity to godliness. Do they live their faith, and does their faith override their personal desires?

The "acid test" (for me) in selecting individuals based on their character involves their ability to embrace biblical forgiveness. Although this is a basic component of our faith, **few** actually practice this command. Biblical forgiveness involves not only forgiving a person for an offense, but then reinstating that person to the same level of relationship that you had before the offense was committed. This, of course, is what is taught in the accounts of the prodigal son and Christ's reinstatement of Simon Peter. Yet often I find that "Christians" are far more punitive and choose to inflict pain rather than obey Christ.

Leadership team members, whether board level or as a part of a ministry, will be exposed to the best and the worst of church life. They will have to have those hard discussions about decisions, budgets, personnel and programs. There will be creative conflict in order to create consensus. Here, more than any other place in the church, the discipline of forgiveness is imperative if the body is to grow.

Members who respect each other and desire a common goal will bring good thinking and interaction to the decision-making process.

The second quality that Pastor Hybels states a potential member of the leadership team needs is *Commitment*. It is a common experience that churches will have to travel through challenging times before they emerge in the new light of growth. Change produces tension, and tension elicits fear, measures faith and can expose the base elements of human character. Individuals who are called to leadership possess the ability to stay focused on the main objective in spite of the roughness of the waves. These are the positive, stabilizing leaders of the church whose ***commitment brings new courage*** to the congregation.

When selecting leaders, do not be afraid of stating what is expected of a leader's commitment. First, in terms of service, we rarely ask anyone to serve for less than three years. Our reason for that is simply because we will train, assimilate into the leadership structure and develop these people's talents, gifts and ministries. Such an extensive investment demands commitment.

Long-term commitment provides stability to the ministry. People respond adversely to high rates of turnover. I believe that reversing the insecurity that this creates begins at the top. When I came to my current pastorate, I stated that this would be the last church I would pastor until retirement. I was 35 at the time, and now (17 years later) our church continues to enjoy the security of knowing our key leaders are committed to the ministry in our region. It is an important component for helping a church to take steps that are challenging for them.

The last quality that Hybels looks for in his leadership team members is *Chemistry*. Chemistry truly is a subjective ingredient, but being subjective does not make it an invalid element for leadership. Every fall, I witness football teams that have to deal with expensive and highly talented individuals who simply do not "fit" on the team because of chemistry.

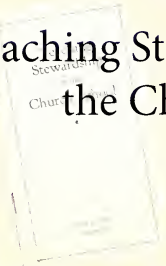
Chemistry is that good-natured rapport that you have amongst likeminded persons. It is that sense that this guy will "watch my back" and be there when the going gets tough. It is the belief that we will speak highly of each other and challenge negative threats to both the individuals in leadership and the mission of the team. It is thick-skinned, able to forgive quickly and minimize moments that could divide. In a phrase, these people constantly are diligent to produce "the highest and best good." Internally, they like each other and enjoy the process of being a team.

Selecting a quality leadership team is the best way to generate consensus in the church. Members who respect each other and desire a common goal will bring good thinking and interaction to the decision-making process. This creates an atmosphere of ownership, and unity emerges, inspiring the church to follow. Few things surpass the joy of experiencing good chemistry on your leadership team.

Breaking the resistance barrier is a primary ingredient to helping SECs overcome the plateaus and declines on their health charts. There are staggering statistics that would have us abandon the challenge of bringing renewal to Small Established Churches. But in America the Barna group estimates that 65% of all churches are SECs. Discovering how we can bring renewal to this majority of churches in America today is a worthy investment of our lives.✝

Dr. William H. Chadwick is serving as pastor of the Stroudwater Christian Church (AC) in Portland, Maine

Teaching Stewardship in the Church School



by B.J. Dean
March, 1927

Those who would impress others with the importance of any subject must first believe in that subject themselves. If we wish to teach stewardship successfully in our church schools we must have teachers who believe in and who practice tithing as the only method of financing God's work which bears the stamp of his approval. Those who theorize only will seldom win converts to any system. How much good would it do for me to try to teach boys and girls to be honest if they knew me to be dishonest, or to teach them to be truthful if they knew me to be untruthful? It is sadly true that our "actions may speak so loud" that the boys and girls "cannot hear what we say," but fortunately the reverse is also true and we may make our actions speak so loud that they cannot help hearing what we say.

If the foregoing is true, it will be conceded without argument that if we are to have departmental instruction in stewardship, we must have as many teachers who believe in and practice tithing as we have departments, unless we can arrange to give the instruction at different periods and to move from department to department the teachers who are qualified.

All who understand teaching know that methods which may produce excellent results with adult classes may utterly fail if used with boys and girls of primary and intermediate grades. While there are many who will agree that Christian stewardship, or tithing as it is more commonly known, ought to be taught in all departments of our church schools, it is probably true that not one school in 50 has made provision for systematic departmental instruction along that line.

Departmental instruction in stewardship should be provided at least once each quarter in every church school, but if for any reason departmental instruction cannot be provided, special work along this line should be given no less often to the school as a whole. Ten or 15 minutes at the opening or closing of the school should be set aside for the work and the best qualified teacher available placed in charge. To do this work effectively before the whole school, both language and method must be adapted to the boys and girls rather than to the adults, and if that is done, it will be found that the adults are learning also, even though they may be partaking of milk with the boys and girls rather than being fed on the strong meat — which they probably would prefer. In view of this situation the remainder of this discussion will be devoted to the consideration of methods of teaching stewardship to boys and girls.

Boys and girls are always interested in the concrete, but they seldom care much for the abstract. Because of this we make use of sand tables, blackboards, maps, charts and other material aids. Resourceful teachers can always find ways in which these material aids can be used in teaching stewardship. For example, if a sand table and building blocks are available, give each child 10 blocks and the let each one give one block to the teacher to be used in building a church. If sufficient and suitable blocks are not available, counters or bits of cardboard representing money can be given to the children from which they may give one-tenth to the teacher to be used in buying material with which to build a church, to feed the poor or to carry out any other branch of Christian work which the teacher may wish to exemplify. This suggestion may be varied and carried out indefinitely.

Another excellent method of interesting and instructing young people (and older ones as well), in topics which are more or less abstract, is to make large use of questions and answers. The questions should be well-framed and the answers to them obvious.

Illustrations presented in story form, if well told, will hold the attention of both young and old and will produce lasting impressions. These illustrations and stories should be chosen from fields in which the children have had experience. To choose illustrations from city life for boys and girls who know only the country would be to invite restlessness and

inattention: and illustrations from the country for city children are equally ineffective.

Another excellent way of presenting the subject of tithing to both young and old is to make use of a playlet or dramatization of a convincing argument in favor of systematic giving. Young people always enjoy preparing for and taking part in such exercises, and older people always listen with interest when such playlets are being presented. Care should be taken, however, that only such playlets are chosen as have real educational value along the line of stewardship and in which devotion rather than entertainment predominates. Anything that cannot appropriately be given in a house dedicated to the worship of Almighty God, should be rejected altogether if to be given in the church building. To resort to burnt cork or outlandish costuming may be all right in a hall or schoolhouse, but the writer is strongly of the opinion that they shouldn't ever be resorted to in the house of God.

Another excellent method of imparting instruction in tithing is to have some pupil, who has ability as a reader, read a selection. If time and inclination will not permit the selection to be committed to memory, the printed page may be used by the reader, but special preparation should be made for the reading in any case.

Boys and girls always like to work in groups. To know that other boys and girls are doing a thing seems to be sufficient reason for them to want to try the same thing. Older people are not immune from the same influence. Advantage may be taken of this characteristic by organizing tithing groups or tithing classes. All attempts to organize groups of this kind should be preceded by careful instruction as to our obligations to God and how we may discharge them. Impress upon the boys and girls that since God made us, he not only owns us but also all that we have. Tell them that God does not need our money, but he has given us a responsibility toward his needy children — a responsibility which will call for money and time if we are to assume the responsibility as we should. If we would return to God a portion of the money which he has entrusted to us, we must do so by using it to help some of his children. Jesus taught this lesson to his disciples when he said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Much of the value of our teaching will be lost if we do not get our pupils to put into practice the things they have learned. One of the best ways to learn to do is by doing. Proceed to organize a "Tithing Class" with as many members as possible. Using attractive application and membership cards will help. It would also be good to create convenient and attractive "Tithing Boxes" and suitable account books in which each tither may keep a record of all receipts and expenditures of his tithe. If attractive in appearance these "tithing outfits" will appeal strongly to boys and girls and will be appreciated by older tithers as well.

Adults who take upon themselves "Jacob's vow" (Genesis 28: 22) will probably remain true to that vow as long as they remain true to the cause of Christ, but younger people will need frequent instruction and encouragement to prevent them from becoming unmindful of their financial obligations to God.

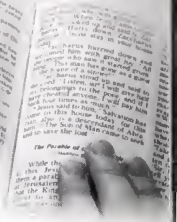
Create an interest in Stewardship by organizing Tithing Classes!

METHODS OF TEACHING STEWARDSHIP

- Make use of sand tables, blackboards, maps, charts and other material aids.
- Make large use of questions and answers.
- Use illustrations presented in story form.
- Make use of a playlet or dramatization of a convincing argument in favor of systematic giving.
- Have a pupil, who has ability as a reader, read a selection.
- Have tithing groups or tithing classes, using attractive application, membership cards, "Tithing Boxes" and account books. ✞

B.J. Dean was secretary of the Advent Christian Tithing Association, which was based in Mendota, Illinois, in 1927 and has since been absorbed into the Advent Christian General Conference of America. During Dean's tenure, the Tithing Association produced dozens of tracts on the subject of Stewardship, which were widely circulated among the Advent Christian churches. This article is an abbreviation of one of those tracts.

Twisted Scriptures



Rev. Tom Warner and Rev. Rex Hutto

According to certain prominent Christian authors and television preachers, American and Canadian Christians and their governments must give unqualified support to the state of Israel. They usually base this view on God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3:

> "**I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.**"[1]

According to author Tim LaHaye, "God promises to bless those nations that are a blessing to Israel and curse those nations that are not."[2] Pastor John Hagee warns, "It is important to be right on the Israel question when you consider that being wrong brings you under the curse of God."[3]

Hagee explains, "I'm not trying to convert the Jewish people to the Christian faith." [4] "What we're saying to the Jewish community is, what we have in common is far more important than what separates us. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. You do not. Let's accept that difference and go forward."[5] Startling statements to hear from a gospel preacher!

Do our brothers LaHaye and Hagee have a correct understanding of Genesis 12:3? Or are they unwittingly distorting its meaning? Will God really curse any person or nation who fails to support the modern state of Israel? Is having a biological connection to Abraham, through Jacob/Israel, of spiritual consequence today?

The Jewish/Christian apostle Paul tells us, "**Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children**" (Romans 9:6-7). In Romans 11, he pictures the covenant people as branches in an olive tree. Some natural branches (Jews) were broken off as a result of their unbelief (v. 20), even as some wild olive branches (non-Jews who accepted Jesus) were grafted into the olive tree (v. 17), thus becoming part of the covenant people.

God counts a person among his chosen on the basis of that one's relationship to Christ. "**He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**" (John 1:11-12).

Before coming to Christ, Gentiles (non-Jews) were "excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. Through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:12-13,19; 3:6).

The promises to Abraham and his "seed" were ultimately made to *the Seed*, Jesus Christ; and "if you

"...things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:16, 29).

A New Covenant Israel has emerged, which includes Jews and non-Jews who embrace Jesus. In every age, only those who belong to the elect "remnant" in Israel are truly God's people. Jews and Gentiles who confess Jesus as Lord share that status and the promised inheritance of "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). This inheritance is much more than an earthly Jerusalem and its surrounding real estate. We look for the heavenly city and the earth made new (Hebrews 11:10, 16; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4ff.).[6]

So how does the Genesis 12:3 promise apply to this time in history? If the promises to Abraham and his seed were actually to Christ, as we've seen, then there is no reason to think this promise is any different. It would also apply to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, who make up the universal Christian Church. That would mean that those who "bless" Christians, by receiving them and the Christ they preach, will be blessed; while those who "curse" Christians and the Lord they confess will be cursed (cf. Matthew 10:14-15, 40).

But our brothers LaHaye and Hagee (and many other Christians) appear to think the Genesis text requires the support of every action taken by the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who now live in the Holy Land. Such an understanding places them in a very awkward position whenever the Israeli government or military does something wrong.

Israel has as much right to protect itself against military and terrorist attacks as any other nation. But when — in the name of "defense" — Israel brutally unleashes its military might and kills hundreds of noncombatants,[7] that is as wrong as Hamas suicide bombers or Hezbollah rockets targeting Israeli civilians. God's Word **never** calls us to support evil, whether perpetrated by Jews or by Arabs.

We love the Jewish people — and Arabs as well. And we must speak the truth in love: our spiritual standing with God is not defined by the blood that is **in** us, but by the blood that was shed **for** us.

"**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem**" (Psalm 122:6), but recognize that there will never be any real and lasting peace apart from the Prince of Peace. Praying for Jerusalem's peace means praying for the gospel to transform Arab and Israeli hearts.

(Endnotes)

[1] All Scripture references are from the New International Version

[2] Newsweek interview, 8/1/06 http://msnbc.msn.com/id/14083809/site/newsweek/

[3] Charisma magazine, October 2005. http://www.charismamag.com/display.php?id=11822

[4] Houston Chronicle, April 30, 1988, sec. 6, pg. 1, quoted in http://www.pfo.org/jonhagee.htm

[5] British Broadcasting Company interview. 2002, quoted in www.jhm.org/mag-pdfs/israelmag.pdf, p.19.

[6] Cf. Romans 4:13, which says that Abraham and his offspring will inherit "the world," not merely the Holy Land. Apparently geographic Israel was only a down payment on the full inheritance!

[7] One recent example happened after Hezbollah militia kidnapped two Israeli soldiers in July 2006. Israel's military response killed more than 700 Lebanese civilians (including many professed Christians), and destroyed billions of dollars worth of Lebanon's infrastructure, displacing more than 900,000 Lebanese and thousands of foreign nationals living in Lebanon. Hezbollah's guilt for random shelling of certain Israeli cities was undeniable, but to support Israel's indiscriminant response exceeds anything Scripture mandates. http://www.richardsilverstein.com/tikun_olam/2006/08/18/lebanon-war-now-for-the-highlights/ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Middle_East_conflict.✞

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Advent Christian
General Conference
Interim President
Rev. Brent Ross

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As you read this report, I will probably be up to my elbows in excitement. I love this season of the year. It is a time for giving thanks to God for his blessings in our lives. It's also a time for giving presents to those we love. This year we have the added excitement of having our oldest son, Jeremy, get married to a beautiful Christian woman named Erica Delgado. I will have the privilege of performing that special ceremony on December 2. We thank the Lord for his choice of Erica to be part of our family. I hope that you will forgive me for sharing this bit of personal information, but I'm one proud papa!

Philippians 1:3 says, "I thank my God every time I remember you." I want to say that I'm thankful for my Advent Christian family. How I thank God for the many different ways you are serving the Lord around the world! I have had the privilege of hearing stories of new converts, baptisms, miraculous healings and new churches being planted. I've heard testimonies of God's provision, protection and power. I want to thank you for all that you are doing to build up the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul went on to write, "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:4-5). The Advent Christian family has a unique partnership in the Gospel. Because we are autonomous in government, our denomination doesn't coerce us to do things. We join in the ministry together willingly, sharing the partnership of the Gospel message. We believe that we can accomplish more together than we ever could alone. Because of you, we have women's ministries, youth ministries, college student ministries, urban and ethnic ministries and ministries that touch over 40 countries in the world. Thanks!

On your behalf, I would like to say "Thanks!" to some faithful servants who serve all of us through our Charlotte offices. Without these folks, our ministry together would suffer greatly. So, "Thanks, Executive Director Ron Thomas! Thanks, Director of Operations Richard Russell! Thanks, Editor John Roller! Thanks, Director of Communications Keith Wheaton! Thanks, Director of Outreach Tim Fox! Thanks, Director of Nurture Sam Warren! Thanks, Coordinator of Women's Ministries Pam Buchanan! Thanks, Executive Director's Secretary Nancy Brooks! Thanks, Tina Pressley, for running Venture Bookstore! Thanks, Mary Ritchie, for serving as Receptionist and Sam Warren's Secretary! Thanks, Dawn Rutan, for heading up our Information Services and Accounting! Thanks, Jan Thomas, for being our Assistant Editor! Thanks, Julia Brock, for serving as Outreach Secretary! Thanks, Shirley Efird, for being our Bookkeeping Assistant! Thanks, Helen Hagler, for heading up our Mail Room! Thanks, Donna Martin, for being our Mail Room Assistant! Thanks, Dawn Russell, for your work in Venture Book

store!" These folks serve us well day after day. I'm very glad that they are on our team. Some of these people you know very well. Others you may have never met. All are vital to our ministry. Thank you, Lord, for these faithful servants!

One of my favorite verses is Philippians 1:6. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." God always completes what he begins. That is our hope. The God who began the good work in your life will complete it one day when Jesus comes again. What a glorious day that will be!

As another year is coming to a close, perhaps you would consider giving a thank-you gift to God for his blessings in your life through our denomination. Your gift could make it possible for us to finish the year in the black. I want to thank you for being part of the family. Please say a prayer for Jeremy and Erica on December 2, and look to the skies for there is another wedding day to come! On that day, all of the family will be at the table for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Maranatha!✞

God Bless!
Brent

(Editorial continued)

15,966 Advent Christians in the United States (2004 A.C. Manual statistics, pg.14). The total income of the Advent Christian people in the United States must therefore be about $640,236,600 a year. One-tenth of that would be $64,023,660.

The second question is harder. The Jewish Temple to which Malachi referred was destroyed in A.D. 70. No physical building has been called "the Temple" since that date — at least not in the Bible. In I Corinthians 3:16, the Apostle Paul exclaims, "Surely you know that you are God's temple!" (The "you" is plural in Greek.) That statement was addressed to "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Each local congregation of Christians is God's temple.

If the full amount of our tithes ($64,023,660) were brought to our 288 U.S. churches, the average Advent Christian church would have an annual budget of $222,304.37. (That's assuming only the tithes as their income, without adding any offerings or monies from other fund-raising.) I dare say the majority of our churches would experience a significant increase in their annual income if this happened.

The third question is the hardest. What "kinds of good things" would God pour out on us? The answer might have a lot to do with how the churches spent that money. Would they spend it all on buildings, salaries, and programs to serve their own needs? Or would a generous portion go to outreach, including missions and denominational ministry? If the churches themselves set an example for their members by tithing their budgets, that would release $22,230.44 per church (a total of $6,402,366) per year for ministry beyond their walls. Suppose one-third of that money went to their local Conference, one-third to the Regional Conference, and the remaining third to the General Conference. An average local conference income would be $76,218.64; an average Region would receive $426,824.40; and General Conference income would total $2,134,122.00!

How do those figures compare with the present situation, pertaining to General Conference? It would definitely cure all the financial "challenges" ACGC now faces. In addition to paying all of the budgeted ministry expenses, this plan would enable us to save the money needed to promote several fund-raising efforts every year. None of those would be needed if every Advent Christian tithed and the churches tithed to Conferences, Regions, and the General Conference. Imagine a world in which every Sunday you placed a check representing 10% of the income you received that week in the offering plate, and no other appeals for money were ever made, because all the bills were paid from that one check (and the other 15,965 like it).

Now comes the really hard question: why isn't this blessing already being received?✞

There are 10 differences in these two trees. Can you find all of them?



Crack the Code and use the verse to answer the question.

4 13 1 4 5 14 13 7 2 4 2 9 20 9 4 11 10 20 ,

2 9 20 15 10 8 3 2 9 20 1 9 14 16 17 3 14 2 9

9 14 10 5 4 2 9 20 6 5 8 6 15 , 8 13 17 2 9 20 15

18 4 3 20 17 17 4 3 13 8 13 17 3 4 6 10 9 14 12 20 17

9 14 5 . 2 9 20 13 2 9 20 15 4 12 20 13 20 17

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12 6 20 10 20 13 2 20 17 9 14 5 3 14 2 9 7 14 19 2 10

4 19 7 4 16 17 8 13 17 4 19 14 13 1 20 13 10 20

8 13 17 4 19 5 15 6 6 9 . ***Who Are We?*** **Matthew 2:11**

CODE:									
	A - 8	G - 7	M - 5	S - 10	Y - 15
	B - 18	H - 9	N - 13	T - 2	Z
	C - 1	I - 14	O - 4	U - 11	
	D - 17	J	P - 12	V	
	E - 20	K	Q	W - 3	
	F - 19	L - 16	R - 6	X	



As Children

"...Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

by Dawn Russell

WORD SEARCH

Find these Thanksgiving dinner dishes

C	O	R	T	D	A	L	A	S	O	L	L	E	J	S	A	M
A	R	O	L	L	S	E	Y	F	F	I	S	T	W	E	P	A
S	U	N	T	U	B	D	A	L	P	A	R	G	E	O	H	P
G	G	D	O	F	I	R	T	E	C	C	O	L	V	T	Y	U
R	N	Q	W	R	S	V	O	I	Y	Q	K	B	R	A	J	A
E	I	C	B	E	S	M	H	P	S	S	J	E	E	T	H	M
E	S	O	J	S	A	L	U	N	I	Y	O	V	G	O	I	P
N	S	R	F	H	M	D	Q	I	E	T	A	R	R	P	V	E
B	E	N	T	F	W	E	G	K	E	E	A	N	T	D	U	A
E	R	Y	P	R	N	A	R	P	I	V	U	L	U	E	C	S
A	D	V	E	U	H	U	I	M	Y	F	E	B	W	H	A	K
N	B	J	K	I	T	I	W	U	A	I	J	R	O	S	R	H
S	S	E	O	T	A	T	O	P	T	E	E	W	S	A	F	Y
R	M	L	R	E	I	P	E	L	P	P	A	K	E	M	E	I
B	R	O	C	C	O	L	I	C	A	S	S	E	R	O	L	E

TURKEY
HAM
DRESSING
MASHED POTATOES
ROLLS
PUMPKIN PIE
CORN
BROCCOLI CASSEROLE
PEAS
GRAVY
JELLO SALAD
APPLE PIE
GREEN BEANS
FRESH FRUIT
SWEET POTATOES

Fill in a word that fits in the blanks from the Bible verses listed. Then use the letters in the special boxes to spell a word.

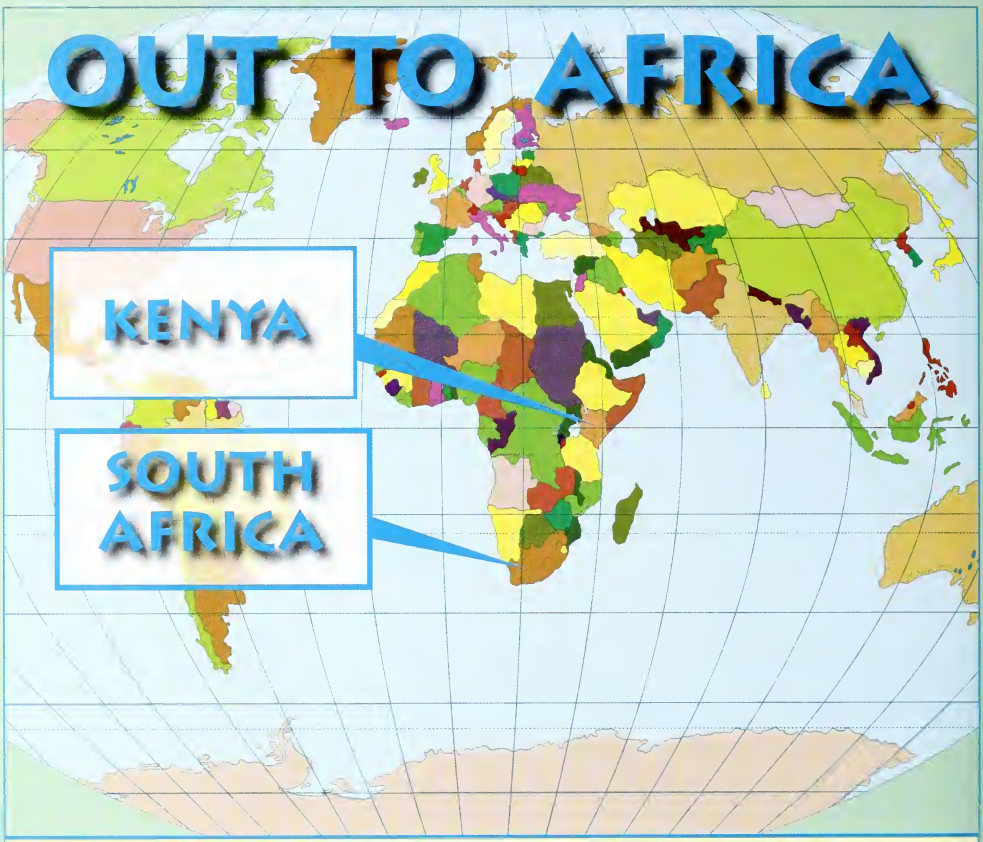
1. ☐☐☐☐☐ Matt. 2:11
2. ☐☐☐☐☐☐ Luke 2:12
3. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Matt. 2:1
4. ☐☐☐☐ Matt. 2:2
5. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Luke 2:4
6. ☐☐☐☐☐ Matt. 2:6
7. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Luke 2:8
8. ☐☐☐☐☐☐ Luke 2:15

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

Answers: gifts, manger, Bethlehem, star, Nazareth, Judah, shepherds, angels

OUT TO AFRICA



By Carol Vandable

Last spring I had the honor and privilege of accompanying ACGC Executive Director Ronald Thomas and Director of Nurture Samuel Warren on a mission trip to Africa. We visited two missions: Riouso, Kenya and Johannesburg, South Africa. But it was Kenya that grabbed my heart and haunts my dreams.

The trip from St. Louis, Missouri to Kisii (a small town in southwestern Kenya) took a little over 48 hours, but it seemed as though we had traveled 100 years back in time. I thought I was prepared for what I was about to see. I knew that as a "third world" country, the economy would be depressed, but



I also knew that as a mission field, they were exploding. I anticipated finding a sense of joy in the people — the simple joy of knowing the Lord. Nothing prepared me for the reality of Kenya.

Kenya is a land of stark contrasts. From the sparkling expanse of Lake Victoria to the lush green valleys to the breathtaking mountain vistas, this land is a testament to the majesty of God's creation. A closer look reveals a land ravaged by poverty, disease and despair.

- A land where over a million adults are infected with AIDS. Life expectancy is 49 years for a man and less for a woman.
- A land where entire villages live in mud huts with no doors or glass in the windows. There is no electricity and no running water. The lack of sanitation is evident in the cities as well as the villages.
- A land where water is hauled from the nearest source, sometimes a stream, sometimes just a mud puddle beside the road. This same water source is shared with domestic animals — cows, chickens, goats — which run loose everywhere. Laundry is done in the nearest stream.
- A land where private transportation is a person's own two feet. A few of the very fortunate have a bicycle, but for most, if they have to travel, they walk.
- A land where the weather determines if they eat in the coming year or endure the recurring cycle of drought and famine. They eat what they are able to grow.
- A land where education is provided by the government through elementary school, yet the parents must bear the cost of uniforms and school supplies. After eighth grade, tuition must be paid as well. If the money is not available, the children enter the work force in order to supplement the family's income.
- A land where young girls become wives, mothers and caregivers for the household at an early age. The domestic role deprives them of opportunities for an education.
- A land where 42 different tribes coexist, all with different languages and cultures.
- A land that relies heavily on agriculture to support the national economy, yet lacks basic tools. The common field laborer uses hand hoes and machetes.
- A land with an ever-increasing population of orphans due to the AIDS pandemic, yet no resources to care for them. That care is left to the surviving relatives or people within the churches who are barely able to support themselves.



In the midst of all this, sitting on a hilltop with a panoramic view of the valley below is the Riouso AC Church. This brick building, with exposed



The first AC church in Riouso, Kenya



The new church building in Riouso, Kenya



Congregation worshipping in the new church

rafters and empty window panes, reflects the simplicity and beauty of the people within. They are a kind and gentle group with a genuine love of their Lord and a burning passion to share that love with others. I had expected to find joy and, in that, I was disappointed. Their way of life has inhibited their joy, but what I did find was hope — hope that when Jesus returns, this life will cease to exist, and in its place there will be an eternity in his holy presence with no hunger, no disease, no suffering. Until then, they hold on to the promise that the Lord will provide the means to continue reaching out and caring for others.

The needs are staggering and heartbreaking, yet some of their requests were shockingly simple. I met with a group of ladies and asked them what we could do to help them. I was expecting them to request one of the basic and obvious needs such as food, clothing, vitamins, or water filtration systems, yet their number one request was Bibles. BIBLES! They were so hungry for the word that it took precedence over nourishment or clean water. One young girl approached me and asked for something of mine. I was racking my brain trying to decide what I had in my purse to give her when she clarified her request by asking for my Bible. Relieved that I could at least grant this one request, I turned my back to retrieve my Bible, and when I turned back, six more were waiting with outstretched hands and hope in their eyes. I don't think I'll ever again be able to go to a mall or a restaurant without being haunted by the image of those girls standing before me silently pleading for my Bible.

Other requests were more overwhelming — for example, resources to care for widows and orphans. We met one young widow, 18 years old, with four children. When her husband died of AIDS, this young girl was left with no means of support for herself or her children. Taking on the burden of five additional mouths to feed is almost impossible for most of the families in the church. Orphans present an even bigger problem in that they often have no surviving relative for support. Siblings are often separated and become part of other families just to survive. Education and medical care are luxuries not afforded to most.



Kenyan pastors at a workshop, led by Dr. Sam Warren. Also pictured is Carol Vandable.

We currently have 12 AC pastors in Kenya, most of whom are young and energetic, with a burning desire to evangelize; hence, our churches are expanding at an astounding rate. Many of the pastors cross national borders to establish missions in refugee camps. The Great Commission is more than just a scripture to them; it's a mission — a way of life. They are burning with the desire to share the hope of Jesus Christ with those who don't know him, yet they are also burdened with a need — "educate our children." These pastors receive no financial support from us, so providing for their children's education is extremely difficult. Even the cost of uniforms and school supplies for elementary-aged children is beyond most of their means.

So what can we do? How can we support this growing need? Where do we even start?

- Prayer – Pray the Lord will continue to bless the efforts on the mission fields and ask for his wisdom and guidance in ways to support these efforts.
- Awareness – Educate yourself on what is happening. Learn how God is blessing these people despite their needs. Then learn what their needs are. Kenya is just one of many.
- Bible Study – I spent a lot of time in my Bible during and after this trip. I keep coming back to one passage in particular: 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 — "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."
- Giving – Share your blessings. We are so profoundly blessed in this country. Even the poorest of us have much compared with how they live in Kenya. With that blessing comes a responsibility to share our abundance with those who struggle just to survive.

Going to Africa was a life-changing experience for me. The Lord opened my eyes and truly humbled me by showing me what faith and hope really are. It deepened my passion for missions and energized me to work tirelessly to support their needs. I recently shared this story with a group of 37 teenagers at a youth camp. When they asked how they could help, I pointed out that if one of them sacrificed one Big Mac a week for a year, the money thus saved would provide nine Bibles for Kenya. If all 37 of them did the same thing, it would pay for 350 Bibles. One person can make a difference — a group of people can make a HUGE difference.

This is my calling. What's YOURS? How can YOU help? How WILL you help?✞



Carol Vandable, pictured at right, is Sunday school superintendent at Hilltop AC Church in Pacific, Missouri

Coming soon!

Yes, it is that time of year again! Watch your mailboxes! ***Venture Bookstore*** will be sending out a packet of our best-selling Christmas catalogs! Inside of these catalogs you will find a wide variety of music, programs and skits for all ages and combinations of participants. We are also going to include a few catalogs with exciting new materials available through ***Venture Bookstore.***

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